University of Alberta

Formalization and Dialogue in the Music Lesson

by

Michelle Joy Crouch ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Music

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Abstract

This paper challenges the perceived imbalance between the attention given to texts created by the university music lesson --such as "the emotional content" and "the meaning of the music"-- and the canon of written texts which typically constitute its primary focus. It encourages university teachers and students of applied music to adopt ethnographic concepts of dialogue, participant observation, and reflective self-awareness, which firmly locate them in a dynamic, dialogical encounter. The experience is thus thought to become one which helps to integrate and transform theoretical and practical issues, without debilitating students by a sense of inevitable failure to attain to fixed standards of musical utterance and artistic excellence innate to the so-called musical masterworks they are performing.

dedicated to the memory of

a teacher

who was my father

Graeme J. Crouch
1940-1993

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Introduction: Research Methods

At the heart of an undergraduate music student's university career is the music lesson. "Private" lessons are on paper a negligible part of a broader and more extensive curriculum of musical studies, but for a performer in a four-year Bachelor of Music (BMus) program, over 100 hours will be spent in private instruction[1] -- if all goes well, with the same instructor -- and anywhere between 1872 and 3744 hours will be spent in solitary practice time.[2] A performing student whose main goal is to excel at playing his/her instrument, often views music theory and music history courses as more or less peripheral to what s/he really wants to do. Anything which takes him/her away from the practice room may well be viewed as a nuisance, a competitor for precious time and energy, and resented as one that usually wins, at least in the first couple of years in a program. If academic courses are poorly taught besides, tremendous frustration results.

In my experience, very little dialogue exists between the two ends of the hallway, so to speak, i.e., between the performers and the academics. Many academic musicians seem to resent performers, and insist that so much emphasis on performance perpetuates unintelligent and incompetent students, and ultimately incompetent musicians that they are embarrassed --in more

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1 This figure is based on a 13 week term. Lessons are 1 hour per week, for 13 weeks, for 8 terms in a 4 year degree. This does not include extra lessons, which are not uncommon if a certain project seems to require it.

2 This figure is based on the expectation placed on me at my first lesson at university, with some leeway for less rigorous practice guidelines or habits. My teacher expected me (and I assume all students in the studio) to practice 5-6 hours a day 6 days a week. If a student averages 3 hours of practicing a day 6 days a week, 18 hours a week for a 13 week term times 8 terms, s/he practices a total of 1872 hours, not counting the summer months. If a student averages 6 hours a day for the same length of time, s/he will practice 3744 hours in a 4 year degree, not counting the summer months. Students will rarely practice less than 3 hours per day, and only the exceptionally industrious more than 6 on a regular basis. It is by no means uncommon for students to practice all year around. These figures represent an estimated minimum.

astute circles-- to be associated with. Performing musicians argue that theory classes continue to be taught by people who never listen to music and who seem not to care how the exercises, perspectives and information in these classes will help students to play their instruments better. "Besides," they argue parenthetically, "theory's boring! Look what Pavarotti has done, and he can barely read music." Relevance and integration of perspectives between the two groups, and, even more basically, dialogue, seem scarce in music institution politics.[3]

But institutional politics are unknown to most applicants to music programs. Many music students, at least in Canada, choose a university according to convenience (how close it is to home), which is not surprising, as many of them are still teenagers when they enter university.[4] Perhaps more uncommonly at the undergraduate level, an informed music student chooses a particular university music school on the basis of the person teaching there in his/her applied area. It is not uncommon for such a student to be slightly older, either having worked for a year or two after high school, or having pursued another area of interest first. Given these differences, there is a tremendous spectrum of desires and expectations among undergraduate music students, regardless of the supposedly "unifying standards" which governed their acceptance into the program. For some, music is avocational, simply something they do better than most, but not a valid career option. If they graduate more skillful and knowledgeable about their hobby, they have achieved everything they wanted from the experience. Most are more "serious" about "their" music and may well have goals of becoming career musicians, prolific performers

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3 I am aware that academics has taken an unusually strong turn away from performance in the University of Alberta music department where this study was executed.

4 Students typically complete high school at age seventeen or eighteen and go directly to university.

and/or pedagogues in their respective applied areas. For such students, playing their instruments is often already more than just a hobby, something they could not imagine themselves without, something in which they have invested a great deal of their personal identity.

The music lesson is important. Not only is it at the center of students' experiences in a university music program, but this very individual experience is generally common among the various music specialists in a music department. Having so said, the experience is in fact, anything but common, but my point is that whether or not academic musicians (i.e. theorists and musicologists) still play their instruments or are classified as performing musicians in their professional lives, they, as well as their performing colleagues, at one time took music lessons, although perhaps not in university. Furthermore, their ideas about music and, in some cases, their choices to give up performance in favor of an academic specialization may well have resulted, consciously and/or unconsciously, from their experience of the music lesson, at least in part.

But this is not a statistical paper seeking to prove these observations and/or speculations. Rather, my theses are two. First, I seek to demonstrate the tremendous importance of the music lesson in the overall scheme of a person's experience in a music degree; secondly, I attempt to suggest a reconstruction of the music lesson encounter in more ethnographic terms in such a way as to demonstrate the benefits some measure of integration between the academic and the performing branches of music learning could have, both for the individual music student and for the broader musical community.

The music lesson, contrary to appearances, does not just study texts in order to realize and perform them: it creates texts. For this paper, I am especially interested to explore how texts of "emotional content" and "the

meaning of the music" are developed at the level of the music lesson. In light of this, I intend to investigate how these difficult texts may be related to texts of technical proficiency, intimate personal-life texts, and the texts which inscribe the production of a perfect performance for a critical audience. Along the way, I will emphasize the highly personal and intimate nature of the encounter in a music lesson, and discuss both potential abuses of this intimacy and ways in which this environment seems to conflict with the institutionally-established "standards" of formalized public performance.

At this point the reader should be warned that this is not a purely descriptive ethnographic paper. Not that I believe such a thing is even possible, but I do not even pretend to aspire to disinterestedness. In fact, it is because I am interested in music pedagogy, specifically the music pedagogy at a university, that I am writing the thesis at all. This, combined with an argument for pursuing community values such as dialogue, respect, and transformation, (as opposed to the values of, for lack of a better term, "rugged individualism") requires that I offer some prescriptive commentary as well.[5] These prescriptions are not something that I am immutably convinced of; I offer them humbly from my perspective at this point in time, a perspective which will continue to change even as it has to this point. They at least demonstrate my unwillingness to endorse the *status quo*, as I see it. Admittedly, this is not without trepidation, having observed how such efforts by far more qualified and respected scholars than I fancy myself, have been criticized, misunderstood, and patronized.[6]

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5 Melinda Cooke. *Transmitting Cultural Values in the Music Lesson.* Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 1994. I have found this a convincing articulation of the intersection of cultural values with the cultural space of the music lesson. Both her thesis and discussions with her about this significantly contributed to my own thinking and I'm grateful to her for that.

6 I refer primarily to Ellen Koskoff's review of Henry Kingsbury's *Music, Talent and Performance* in *Ethnomusicology* and his response several months later (1990-91).

My work in this project is based on more than twenty years of participation in music lessons as "the student", considerably fewer as "the teacher", and most importantly, one year of intense participant observation of the music lesson at the University of Alberta. During this year of observation, I studied the music lesson in four basic ways. First, I regularly attended the lessons of two university students, one of whom I knew a little, the other not at all. Both studied with the same teacher, with whom I was acquainted but did not know very well. I did this after seeking the approval of both the teacher and the two students, and explaining to them the nature of my inquiry. Their responses were positive --in the teacher's case, immediately enthusiastic. In the case of both students, after a thorough explanation in which I had to emphasize that how well they played their pieces was not my focus, they also agreed. Both students seemed reluctant at first and voiced a stream of disclaimers and apologies for the performances they anticipated at lessons: "Just so long as you know, this stuff is not ready; don't expect anything great." When I explained that I was well aware of the rough kind of work that needs to be heard at a music lesson, and that their performances of these pieces was not really what I was most interested in, they relaxed (a bit) and agreed without further persuasion to let me visit their lessons on a regular basis. I had not even arrived at the music lesson, and I already had a significant observation: the students had immediately assumed that their performance--specifically, how well they executed the pieces they were learning-- was what I wanted to observe.

I sat in the same place each week, intentionally as unobtrusive as possible. It gradually became "my place" in the cultural context. From my vantage point, I could see the facial expressions and the bodies of both teacher and student, and I could hear both the music played and the conversations that

took place. I took detailed notes of the lesson --pieces played, what the student did, what the teacher did, conversations, physical movements, etc.-- and typed them up as soon as possible after each lesson, usually the same evening. I did not speak in the lesson, unless on the rare occasion I was spoken to. It seemed to me that the "private" encounter of one-on-one was being disturbed enough already by my presence, and I was always uncomfortable if, for some reason, the teacher referred to me in verbal or non-verbal exchanges, or if I was addressed directly. My discomfort with being there, even with their consent, came from my years of experiencing the intimate and closed relationship of the music lesson.

Talking to people at some point, however, did seem necessary. I talked to two different groups of people outside the context of the music lesson. Indeed, the second way I studied the music lesson is through conversations or interviews with one group, namely students --not only the two students I was observing, but also other students in the department, and some students who had recently graduated from the program, or quit.[7] Sometimes this was one-on-one; other times I organized a group session in an effort to facilitate interaction between other students that I thought might yield information perhaps not so easily revealed if I were just talking to them alone. This was not difficult in my case, as students in this particular department seemed, at least at this time, to have formed a more or less supportive community with one another. This may not be true at other schools, but I knew, as an experienced student, that this was the case among the pianists at this school. In fact, as I progressed in this direction, the student community seemed to emerge as an important part

[7] Incidentally, when interested friends and acquaintances asked in casual conversation what I was writing my thesis about, they often became very interested and not uncommonly volunteered experiences and perspectives of their own, which I did not record as rigorously, but which cannot help but become a part of this text.

of the music lesson experience for at least some of the students.[8]

But a third angle seemed necessary if I was to represent the other obvious point of view in the culture, the teacher. So I talked to teachers as well. I interviewed several other teachers, in addition to the one I was observing on a regular basis. I also observed a couple of masterclasses of other piano teachers. One teacher that I interviewed confessed that he finds that most students by the time they get to university, more than anything need therapy to heal damage from experiences in earlier days of music learning and performing. The teacher's perspective also became more important as I proceeded, not only as the Other in the relationship which constitutes the music lesson, but also as an arbiter between the student and the institution's rather generic expectations of that student.

Fourth, I studied the music lesson through reflection on my own experience of music lessons, all twenty-two years of them, some of them positive, some of them not so positive. This reflection initiated the project in the first place and certainly was enriched and re-shaped by my observations, conversations, and by some of the theoretical concepts I encountered simultaneously in my other academic pursuits, specifically linguistics, women's studies, religion, and political science.

The result is a paper which feels like the beginning of a much longer and more extensive inquiry. The paper is in two parts. The first section will summarize my observations and reflections of the music lesson as a cultural field, providing a context in which to understand the second part of the paper. The second part will likely strike the reader as more theoretical, but will refer to

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[8] Indeed, although I have isolated the music lesson from the rest of the culture in a university music department, I do not imagine that it exists in isolation. Many of the observations within the music lesson must be understood to articulate and to be articulated by the entire musical culture.

the music lesson for examples and clarification. In this regard, I identify with bell hooks' disclosure of what caused her to turn to theory, interestingly also in the context of a critique of pedagogical practices: "I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend -- to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing" (hooks 1994: 59). It is my intent as much as possible to encourage a stronger connection between theory and practice than is sometimes exhibited between this common duality --as it were, to begin to heal the rift between them, at least within myself. The very construction of this duality is for me a theoretical problem that is very much related to the content of this paper.

The whole paper could be described as an attempt to understand the relationship which I perceive certain notions to have to one another within the limited context of the music lesson in a university music program. I am fearfully aware that these notions --power, knowledge, meaning, language, and ultimately, transcendence--have the potential to explode out of my limited corner into an unwieldy discussion of the whole universe. Symptomatic of this potential I suppose, "transcendence" is a problematic term. By it, I mean primarily to describe the cultural practice within musical discourse, equally present in the learning, performing and listening of music, whereby the goal is some kind of "aboveness," some other-worldly construction by which the whole experience is given a variously "high" or "deep" spiritual status. Secondarily and necessarily cursorily, I connect this practice in musical discourse to practices in other specifically religious or spiritual discourses. In my estimation, transcendence amounts to the conceptual result of the specific ways in which the preceding issues unfold. At the same time, within each of the preceding

issues, the shadow of transcendence often causes them to function as they do. Hence, I problematize transcendence most explicitly.

These issues will be discussed primarily in view of how I have observed them to function in the culture of the music lesson at a university. I am aware that each different instrument has distinctive traditions of music lesson performance, which itself would make a worthwhile comparative study. While I have observed only piano lessons, I have conversed with other instrumentalists and singers, and feel that for the focus of this paper there is enough common ground to construct a culture called the music lesson. I do not claim a comprehensive representation of perspectives. Nor am I unaware of my own constructions and the inevitable biases that produce them. But I have attempted at least to imply dialogue in my discussion, representing a few of the many voices and perspectives which I had to choose from in a discussion of this complex culture. It is my hope that the reader will relate to one or more perspectives and will continue the dialogue. While I must acknowledge the perspectival limits and biases of my situatedness, I need not be robbed of the sense that the notions mentioned above are crowding into an area of my intense interest and compelling me to respond. No single discipline is inherently implicated by these notions, but there is no discipline to which they do not potentially belong. I am convinced that crossing so-called disciplinary borders will yield a richer and more relevant study, regardless of how my understanding will be more thinly spread than the "experts" to whom I am indebted for my introduction to these issues. I refuse to be daunted by the impossibility of adequately representing all the voices --the expert theorists' voices, teachers' voices, students' voices, administrators' voices, the specific voices of real people that I have known in my investigation, the voices of those

yet in the future-- all in "my own" voice. It is struggle enough to be willing to speak.

The Music Lesson: A Case Study
A participant observer at a piano lesson

What happens in a music lesson?

"It's a very low experience when you play for your teacher and nothing happens. Something should always happen." - a student

Many things happen in a music lesson, different kinds of things. Some are observable; some are not. Some events seem to be routine; some are more spontaneous. Sometimes the teacher makes them happen, sometimes the student. Sometimes both parties are aware of what is happening; sometimes events seem to be subconscious, or are purposely not disclosed by the one in the know. The expectations of what ought or ought not to happen are usually a silent part of what happens at a music lesson.

In a music lesson as in any artistic venture, the subject/object dilemma becomes acute. The teacher - student relationship is complex, a forced intimacy that is at the same time "professional" and power-inscribing. Dialogue tends to be lopsided, as the cultural assumption is that the student is there to absorb the expertise of the teacher. Traditionally, the teacher's voice is privileged as the "transmitter of knowledge" (hooks 1994: 85), and whatever dialogue may happen can be nothing more than a thinly disguised diplomatic gesture by which the teacher efficiently imposes his/her ideas on the student, ensuring among other things that the expected public performance schedule is kept on target. Or, in the case of a more neo-Romantic approach to pedagogy, the struggle may be to know how best to help a student that s/he perceives is profoundly wounded by experiences of life in general, and experiences of music-learning in particular, rendering the student unable either to dialogue freely or to play expressively.

One music lesson never looks identical to another, but there is a certain routine series of events that can be used as a point of departure from which to discuss more unusual things that may happen in a music lesson, and also from which to theorize what might happen differently. The routine event, from a participant observer's perspective, includes four phases.[9] The first, second, and last phases are more or less routine, although not without significance. The third phase is the most changeable and least conformable to a routine event, and thus will occupy more detailed attention.

It is worth making explicit one important assumption at this point, because it has everything to do with how the lesson proceeds. Both teacher and student typically assume they know what the music lesson is about: the teacher expects the student to learn; the student expects the teacher to teach. No student or teacher in a university music department is new to the music lesson per se. Each comes to the cultural setting of the university music lesson from his/her own world of experiences of this culture, and with those experiences come certain self-understandings, goals, and values. Rather than assuming that these worlds are potentially very different, and acknowledging that both teacher and student may well change --even should change-- through each's contact with the Other, the assumption tends to be that they are the same. Both seem to approach the music lesson as a static formalized space, not as a dynamic and idiosyncratic confrontation of two people, each of whom brings manifold voices and influences who have made him/her what s/he is.

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9 What follows is not a first lesson. I did not attend first lessons as a participant observer, only as a student and as a teacher. A first lesson is a special kind of lesson. The student does not usually play; repertoire is generally chosen for the entire year, and decisions are made regarding in what voluntary and/or command performances the student will perform. Broader goals may also be articulated. For example, one year my teacher said to me at a first lesson, "This year I would like to see you learn to play fast notes more successfully," after which 'we' chose repertoire that employed techniques of velocity. This matter of choosing repertoire is a complex one, and not without hidden conflicts.

Thus, what is taught and how it is taught can easily be inscribed by unarticulated expectations and assumptions on the part of both individuals involved. As these remain unarticulated, music-learning and the goals of musical knowledge can easily default to quantifiable and "objective" musical products: successful executions of pre-existent pieces of music. Meanwhile, inevitable and sometimes acute conflicts remain hidden and silent. This affects all four phases but will become most obvious in the third phase.

The first phase is the "admission" into the specific cultural environment called the music lesson. The student knocks at the teacher's studio door to announce his/her arrival.[10] One of two things will occur. The teacher will either immediately invite the student in, if the studio is empty, or s/he will ask the student to please wait in the hallway until the previous lesson is finished. The "privateness" of a student's one-on-one time with a teacher seems to be protected, even up to the very last minutes of a lesson. The cultural setting is re-established each week when the teacher admits the student alone into the studio. Students often spoke of the lesson using phrases like "going in" or "waiting to go in," often with a sense trepidation and apprehension, rather like going to the doctor when you think something might be seriously wrong.[11]

The second phase, the "commencement" of the lesson, may occur abruptly or gradually. After the student is admitted to a piano lesson, s/he goes directly to the piano from which s/he is expected to play. There are usually two pianos in a university piano studio, one for the teacher to use --either to accompany a concerto, or to demonstrate a point to a student by playing it. The

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10 This is worthy of noting for its difference from students' entrances into other learning environments.

11 One teacher I know was famous for saying by way of welcoming the next student "Next victim," meant as a joke, of course, but which, considering the number of pianistic and psychological casualties who emerged from that studio, seems somewhat disturbing.

other could be called "the students' piano." This is usually the better piano, with better sound and/or better keyboard-action.

If the teacher is ready after the student situates him/herself, the lesson commences immediately. If the teacher for whatever reason needs a break, s/he will excuse him/herself and the lesson will commence upon the teacher's return. At this point the teacher is still in control. After some casual greetings -- "How are you?" "Not bad." "What's been happening?" "Not much." etc., usually initiated by the teacher-- which could be called pre-commencement, the teacher always continues by asking the student something like: "What do we have today?" which means "What do you plan to play today?" which marks the commencement of the music lesson proper. The teacher seems at this point seems to transfer some of his/her control to the student.

There are two things noteworthy about the next event in a lesson's commencement. First, the student always answered in terms of what piece or pieces of music s/he was prepared to play, presumeably chosen from previously agreed upon repertoire; for example, "I think I'll play the Beethoven today." The context for general skill-building and technique-learning seems to be a piece of music; the student never came in and asked to learn a technical skill: e.g. "Today I want to learn to play rhythmically," or "I want to develop finger control today." Students invariably announced which work they were going to play. If the student answered by giving the teacher a choice between two pieces, which happened not uncommonly, the teacher answered "Whatever you want to play." This is consistent with the second observation: the teacher rarely argued with the student's choice. S/he may hint that a certain piece hasn't been heard for awhile, the expectation being that students are working on several pieces simultaneously, but the student's choice of a piece to play is honoured

by the teacher.

This exchange constituting a lesson's commencement provokes some questions, which, if introduced here, may help to frame observations of subsequent events of the lesson. The first question has to do with power, not simply who has the power, but does one person's power emerge as dominant, i.e., able to and exercised to control the actions of the other, and how? The second question pertains to what exactly is learned in a music lesson, and how? At least two possibilities can be concluded from the above exchange. Either it is a cultural given that more abstract musical skills are taught/learned in the context of a repertoire of musical works, or that more general musical skills are not the focus at all, but only the successful execution of certain pieces of music. Or it could be both. The observable event marking the lesson's commencement is the student's response to the teacher's question of what will take place in the lesson, in terms of a musical work.

The complexity of the third phase furnishes a plethora of possible names. The term "production" seems best to capture the exhausting and complex intensity of the main body of the lesson, which always involves different combinations of instruction, experimentation, applied psychology and ideology, all realized through the hard work of both verbalization and musical demonstration. Observations seem to indicate that the teacher produces the lessons, and through them the musical renditions. The student does his/her part by cooperating with the teacher's suggestions and conscientiously (or less conscientiously) practicing the teacher's ideas during the week between lessons. As much as the teacher may strive to inspire the student to take ownership of his/her own music-making, and to encourage students to act independently and creatively, most often at the undergraduate level the student

seems to remain dependent on the teacher's ideas and guidance in order for music-learning to take place. This is not to de-emphasize the student's important work of practicing, which represents proportionately many more hours than the student spends in the music lesson, and may appear to be autonomous by virtue of being unsupervised. However, it would seem that the teacher's input during a lesson largely dictates not only what the student practices during the rest of the week, but also how s/he plays. This represents another set of assumptions that are rarely explored, namely that the student practices privately and autonomously. I have come to believe that there is very little in the culture of music performance that is "private" per se.

The production phase begins when the student starts to play and ends approximately an hour later at the fourth and final phase, which is the usually unceremonious "closure" of the lesson. The student remains seated at the piano throughout the lesson, and the teacher may do any number of things while a student is playing --sit in a chair across the room, follow along in another copy of the written music, stand behind the student and look over his/her shoulder, pace around the room, or any combination of these-- presumably, all while listening thoughtfully. The phone may ring, there may be a knock at the door, all of which the teacher may or may not choose to respond to, but the student always remains at the piano, playing, except when listening to the teacher's instructions, or when answering questions initiated by the teacher.

From the standpoint of an observer, listening to a performance in a lesson is like following someone on a journey: sometimes the vehicle runs smoothly, sometimes there's engine trouble; sometimes the traveller sticks to the designated route, sometimes s/he digresses, usually unintentionally; the trip

may appear pleasurable, or it may be obviously stressful. Occasionally, the student even abandons the ship before the final destination.

The student typically plays completely through whatever s/he planned to play, and upon finishing, waits for the teacher to comment. Sometimes the student does not even look at the teacher in this moment, but pages through the music, or even bows his/her head and looks at the keyboard, or at his/her hands. This moment itself indicates an assumed power relationship which resembles the relationship between a judge and a defendant. The teacher does not dictate this behaviour explicitly, so one would think the student could change it easily enough with an immediate comment or question, but this does not typically happen. The teacher's response may well be to ask the student to comment on the performance, but the student does not offer it without the teacher's prompting. The lesson unfolds from here in various ways.

When the student's playing was going along smoothly, there were fewer extraneous actions to observe in the student than when there were problems. The student appeared to be concentrating intensely on what s/he was doing, sometimes closing his/her eyes in intense concentration. There may or may not have been signs of enjoyment, but everything pointed to his/her being completely engrossed in the activity of playing. For example, during one lesson, the phone suddenly clattered to the floor from its precarious position on a chair and startled the student --she jumped-- so concentrated was she on playing.

The teacher appeared to be equally engrossed when the student was playing with minimal struggle. During smooth performances, the teacher seemed to concentrate to a greater extent on "the music itself," when one could observe him/her tapping his/her foot with the pulse of the music, "conducting" or

"feeling" the phrases with subtle hand and facial gestures, even pacing back and forth while listening. One of the students I observed on a regular basis confessed she interpreted the teacher's pacing during the performance as indicative of pleasure in her performance, and when the teacher sat still, she read it as boredom. From an observer's perspective, when the student was having more trouble playing, the teacher was comparatively still, but certainly did not exhibit boredom. One could say that the teacher appeared to be less intent on "the music" but more intent on the student, as if trying to climb inside the student's head. Admittedly a teacher's reflections on a student's performance would always be in relation to a certain concept of what the music should sound like, but the teacher's energy seemed to be directed differently when the playing was smooth from when the student was struggling.

Typically when a student has finished playing, the teacher, among other things, will attempt to diagnose some major problem with which the student seems to be struggling. For example, in one lesson, the teacher stood across the room and watched the student for most of the performance and then later commented, as part of the diagnosis, that the student was too worried about doing it correctly, conquering the notes: "When I heard you working so hard at this gorgeous soaring section, it was a dead giveaway." Or, in a different lesson, after the student had had a difficult time playing the piece, the student commented "The Chorale is giving me no end of trouble," to which the teacher replied "Are you sure it's not the other way around?", which, although it was lighthearted and they both laughed, was substantially the crux of the problem as the teacher heard it.

There was no shortage of things to observe in the student when the student was still somewhat unfamiliar with the piece, or was perhaps just

experiencing "one of those days." The bottom line was that there were many mistakes, departures from the score, obviously misplaced notes. Linked to these "accidents," all manner of facial expressions and other body language could be observed in the student: disappointed sighs, rolling eyes, disgusted snorts, groans and other oral noises (including profanities), as well as distortions of nose and mouth, all to communicate a student's displeasure with his/her performance. Sometimes it got so "messy" that the student would stop playing, throw his/her hands up in despair (literally) and all but beg the teacher to intervene. After one lesson in which the student had to stop in the middle of a piece, and never did make it to the end during that lesson, the student saw me in the hallway afterward and apologized for "the terrible lesson." This surprised me, because I thought the lesson had gone very smoothly after that, and it had seemed to yield some important new tools and ideas, which seemed, in turn, to make an immediate difference in the ease with which the student played. The student had expressed disgust in no uncertain terms at the "trainwreck," but the teacher did not seem at all alarmed by it and in no way scolded the student or expressed any disappointment in the performance; in fact, the teacher had tried to encourage the student to keep going: "Hey, what's this fainting stuff?" Although the student seemed, from my perspective, to cooperate with the teacher's advice successfully and not unhappily for the remainder of the lesson, later, the student still represented the lesson with apologies for "the terrible lesson."

This particular teacher constantly developed acutely personal texts with respect to the student's rendering of the music; in no lesson which I observed did interaction stay within the bounds of "the purely musical." Problems were not treated as purely technical problems; in fact, sometimes a discussion of

technique was intentionally postponed until a more basic question had been addressed which always had more to do with what the student was about than with what the music was about. This observation provided an important contrast to my own experience of the music lesson, in which every effort seemed to be made by well-meaning and very qualified teachers to treat "the music" as an analyzable object, and my playing of it as an equally analyzable technical object. Problems were diagnosed not inaccurately, but by comparison to this teacher's response, inadequately-- musical problems were not connected to a larger human context but limited to an issue of finger dexterity, for example.

One might conclude that although a teacher needs to be familiar with the standard repertoire and traditions of performing it, so that s/he can listen for students to interact with and realize the repertoire in certain ways, s/he seems also to need a great deal of skill in interpreting students' inevitable failures to fulfill the music in the ways s/he envisions. Rarely will a teacher assume failure is simply because the student is not musically gifted (although I have heard of such devastating comments being offered to students by their teachers). Rather, the hard job for the teacher seems to be discerning whether a student's main problem is laziness and/or lack of attention, or whether despite the student's conscientious efforts, s/he is perhaps constrained by unnecessarily negative self-understandings, which in turn shapes both his/her confidence in playing and his/her practice habits. Of course, getting to the bottom of these issues is not easy; it may well be a job too big for the teacher alone. But it seems certain that successful musical performance depends on more than strictly "technical" skill. As a result, teaching musical performance seems to require knowledge of more than the mechanics and the repertoire.

Although one may describe a lesson in terms of a routine model, it needs

to be emphasized that the music lesson always varies, even when it involves the same teacher and student. Sometimes there are working lessons, where following the initial performance teacher and student work together on refining technical and artistic problems phrase by phrase until time runs out. Sometimes there are philosophical lessons where the teacher does most of the talking, often challenging a student's most basic approach to music making, and even linking it to his/her approach to life in general. Sometimes there are very tense lessons, where one or both is in a bad mood or having a stressful day, and just doesn't function well in such a vulnerable and personal environment. Nearer to important performances, lessons may become chances to run one's program, timing it, experiencing the kind of energy required to sustain an entire concert as a performer.

The "private" lesson

Still, although one is able to make very few broadly applicable generalizations about the music lesson, I have reached two principal conclusions as I have tried to organize my participant observation of the lesson with my conversations with students and teachers, and with my own reflections. The first conclusion is that while the lesson appears to be an encounter between two people, there are many more than just two voices involved.

The concept of a "private" lesson is ultimately a deceptive simplification. It is used to technically distinguish it from the "masterclass" or the "group" lesson, where as a formalized event, it is understood that more than one student will perform, and where both one's own performance and the teacher's feedback take place in the presence of all the attendees. This is known at university as repertoire (rep.) class, a regular performance for critical evaluation,

but a less risky performing environment than a recital would be. Here students share their performance and their teacher's expertise with fellow students who are studying with the same teacher, including graduate students. But even in a so-called private lesson, it is difficult to understand it as truly private. It is institutionally formalized as such, but severe tensions often result from conflicts between students' and teachers' expectations. Still further conflicts result from misguided or ill-communicated agendas of production established by the institution and by the broader musical discourse of which the institution is a part. Contrary to what the term "private" may lead one to believe, the individual student taking the lesson may well be or at least feel incidental or peripheral to what happens in a music lesson.

The first problem with the designation "private" is that "private" usually refers to that over which an individual has exclusive rights, that which is least available to another person, which if transgressed by force becomes a criminal violation, for example, breaking and entering a "private" residence. In the music lesson, the pairing of student and teacher is sometimes an administrative decision, not the choice of the teacher and student at all. Furthermore, the teacher traditionally possesses dominant power. In conversations, students revealed how keenly they were aware of this. Various students offered the following comments:

> A good teacher doesn't teach you about how to play this piece well, or how to do this, or how to do that; he's a person who believes in you, and is always there, no matter how bad it is, or how good it is. He gives you inspiration just for you as a person, not necessarily as a person who plays.

> There needs to be an encouragement factor there, so that you don't leave [the music lesson] feeling like "I can't do this."

> I think that the most intimate relationship you can have is with your piano teacher, because you go there and play, and he's always there if you're playing well, or playing bad, if you're depressed ..., and that gives him incredible power to hurt you or manipulate you, and a good person and a good prof and a good teacher would never take that which you do against you. I think that's incredibly important, because you want to be able to play what comes out naturally and not have to feel defensive.
>
> Music is just my way of being myself.
>
> I feel I change as a person, and then I realize how the piano changes with me.
>
> What my teacher does is points out the problem, but he doesn't always leave you feeling that you can solve this problem. He points out the problem, he can tell you what causes the problem and sometimes he can work through it with you, but a lot of times he does not bother to work through it with you. So you go away feeling smaller.
>
> You walk in, and there's this idea that now you're in university, everything is going to change, that "now we'll teach you how to really play" as if what you were doing before was Mickey Mouse stuff.
>
> The problem here is that the teacher-student relationship is like a marriage: you put two different personalities, two different viewpoints -- everything is different-- together, and then one is in a position of power to boot, which isn't like a marriage, but the separation process is just as painful, especially for the one who has been injured.

The teachers to whom I spoke also expressed understanding of the potentially harmful fallout from the relationship between student and teacher, empathizing with the position the student feels him/herself to be in. One teacher explained:

> There's a real need in a lesson for the student to feel that no matter what they [sic] have just done, it has some kind of worth, and that they have personal worth... that's how we're made, and if the music is personal, it's like you just put your little self on a keyboard and said "Here I am, Master." The Master should have some gratitude for what's just been done.

One teacher specifically talked about trying to avoid producing casualties --students who over the course of time lose their desire and freedom to play:

> It's all the things money can't buy. The university has policies about what my responsibilities are concerning my students, and everything I do which is over and above what my job description says is what makes the experience a valuable one. But the moment you put all that in a policy, then I stop giving it.

Undoubtedly, no teacher is trying to do damage to his/her students, although occasionally one wonders. One study done at the University of Toronto asserted that "music students are subjected by some teachers to verbal or emotional abuse that can drive them away from the performing arts" (Edmonton Journal, 22 November 1997). Sometimes the dialogue which happens in the course of a music lesson seems to be a thinly disguised diplomatic means for the teacher to have his/her way with a student, effecting obedience, but not trust or respect. The latter values, it seems, can only result from a dialogue conceived as a way of life, as an end in itself (Gardiner 1992: 137).[12]

"Private" is not only a misnomer because it refers to a context of prescribed intimacy between two people, rather than an individual's terrain. It also does not express the concept that other voices come into play in the exchange of a music lesson, some of which are not difficult to encounter. I have discerned four different kinds of voices in the music lesson, each kind of voice representing potentially more than one person, sometimes many.

The first category contains voices belonging to previous music teachers of the student. A teacher in a music lesson, whether aware of it or not, is

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12 As musical discourse is unequivocally magnetized to its written representations, and also depends heavily on persons interacting in real time around these texts, the Gardiner is helpful. He engages Bakhtinian critique to explore the relationship of language to the politics of its interpretation, observing and critiquing practices by which voices become authoritative.

potentially engaged in dialogue with all the previous music teachers a student has ever had. For example, the teacher whom I observed, on more than one occasion, made the comment: "There's nothing worse than the old technique -- 'first you learn the notes; then you learn the music.' Leave that devil behind you, because it doesn't work." I observed in the student's response that she understood exactly what the teacher was talking about. I certainly did. That comment brought back a host of memories for me, the observer, of previous teachers of mine who taught according to the proscribed philosophy.

In another lesson, the teacher was trying to help a student play a particular section of a piece less "academically" and with more abandon. The teacher suggested to the student a totally different scenario from the music lesson context, specifically a dimly lit night club or party, where instead of his teacher's listening to him, two beautiful women were listening to him play this particular section. It took several tries before the student achieved the kind of freedom and generosity of sound the teacher envisioned. On the first try, the teacher stopped the student with "Uh-oh, she just lost interest." Each time the student tried, the sound got a little better, and finally when it was much closer to what the teacher envisioned, the teacher asked the student, "Now why can't you play like that at your lesson? What [who] told you that you needed to play intellectually here?" It is not impossible that some former teacher had told the student, implicitly or explicitly, to approach lessons in an intellectual way. An observer couldn't know without asking (and I didn't) whether or not it was intentional; but intentionally or not, the teacher had engaged in dialogue with former teachers. I also had no way of knowing whether or not students found such comments offensive, trapping them between their loyalty to previous teachers, and their desire to please the present one.

The second category of voices is typically made most explicit in the music lesson, namely previous music teachers of the teacher, and other high profile experts respected by the teacher. Comments like "My teacher" --sometimes they are named, sometimes not-- "used to say...", or "I heard Murray Perahia in an interview once, and he said something very interesting...", or "It's like Schnabel always said...." These voices also are a part of the dialogue in a lesson. On the positive side, one could see this to be a professionalizing of the student's work, linking it in some way with the work of a leading performer, and thus complimenting the student by taking him/her as seriously as someone more prominent. Occasionally this may be the case. However, more often the student is not playing as the teacher wants, and those same comments can amount to namedropping, whereby a teacher plugs him/herself into a larger tradition to lend strength to his/her agenda, potentially manipulating students to surrender something they may have worked out very carefully.

The third category of voices is some construction of the voice of the composer, the usually deceased person who wrote the piece the student is playing. This voice becomes very tricky to distinguish from the voice of the teacher, because in the music lesson context, the teacher most often has the power with which to contextualize the music "in the composer's voice." For example, in one lesson that I observed, the teacher asked the student to articulate what her idea of the piece was, acknowledging that sometimes such articulation sounds trite. When the student offered an answer that was in some measure inadequate, --she said she thought it was "sad"-- the teacher began the corrective or instructive part of the conversation with "When you look at Beethoven's whole output, Beethoven is seldom actually sad." The teacher then demonstrated on the other piano a part of a completely different

composition by Beethoven which seemed characterizeable as "sad," but then the teacher continued:

> When Beethoven writes *appassionata* when he is in his middle period, when he is going through turmoil, it means something different than after he has gone through turmoil. When he is writing this, he has only a few years left to live. I can't imagine anything except a tremendous desire to experience whatever is left of the joy of living. I can't hear sadness in...

and the teacher played the opening line of the sonata the student has just called "sad."

This kind of conversation is not at all uncommon in the music lesson. It is vaguely historical, but more glaring in my view is the way in which it -- unintentionally perhaps--"erases" the student's words, all the more troubling because those words were solicited by the teacher. This is in and of itself a laudable action, but when the response is one of erasure, the result seems disrespectful, even violent. The teacher responded by appealling to an institutionally sanctioned view of music history--the same view that undoubtedly governs the teacher's own playing of these works--in order to help the student understand how to play a piece of music. This allowed the teacher to combine "historical" knowledge with some imagination (and probably some experience) of getting older and to produce "the voice of the composer." Furthermore, whether or not the teacher was interested in what made the student describe the music as "sad," this personal meaning was not explored or even validated. Instead, the teacher offered a meaning of the music that transcended this personal meaning, a move consistent with what Lydia Goehr describes as typical of a "romantic" aesthetic, away from "the worldly and the particular to the spiritual and universal" (Goehr 1992, 153). This is part of the teacher's privilege.

The fourth group of voices could be described as pure transference. They are other influential voices the student has encountered in his/her life, and they often become a part of the texts established in the music lesson, namely parents, spouses, other significant adults (grandparents, godparents, uncles, aunts, etc.), ministers and other religious leaders, and school teachers to name a few. One could already hear some of these voices in how the students spoke of their teachers, particularly where the student had been hurt by an abuse of power, for example, "The problem here is that the teacher-student relationship is like a marriage." This at least partially explains some students' dread, even terror of the lesson. One student admitted that for the first two years of university and part of her third year she was terrified to go to her lesson. "I'd sit outside those lessons and shake, I was just scared to go in them." Another student said when I asked, "I don't think I've felt quite as nervous about lessons this year, because I think that I've just sort of given up on myself. But I still get in there and think 'I'm going to start playing' and my hands are shaking and things like that." A friend of mine who eventually quit the program told me she felt she had to psyche herself up for her lesson for half the week and recover from it the other half, repeating the cycle week upon stressful week.

I hasten to add that a student may well mistake the teacher for the institution, and if institutional expectations are feeling burdensome to a student, s/he may interpret it as an unreasonable or impossible-to-please teacher. It is often difficult for a student to distinguish where one ends and the other begins, especially if previous experiences with authority have been in any measure negative. Indeed, the teacher him/herself may have yet to distinguish self from institution, and should s/he embark on such a project, that distinction may be politically extremely difficult and require a great deal of personal sacrifice.

For example, the year before I embarked on this study, the music department held a concerto event in which the university orchestra learned two concertos, each with three movements, and six different student performers were each assigned a movement. The procedure that the piano teachers had agreed upon was that students would not audition for this event, but would be chosen based on their final juried performance of the year before. The six students were simply notified that they had been chosen to play. A year later, this surfaced in conversations I had with one of the students who had performed in this event. She had angrily cooperated with the event mainly because she thought that to decline the invitation would mean that her teacher would lower her mark. What I'm sure was intended by the teacher as an honour or reward, was at this point in the student's life an obligation about which she was not consulted and which caused a great deal of unsolicited stress. I discovered in conversation with one of her friends that she had been angry and resentful toward her teacher most of the year because of this, but she couldn't muster the courage to express how manipulated she felt by having that performance forced on her, because she feared the teacher would punish her in some way. Meanwhile, the teacher remained ignorant.

While students may be reticent or even unable to discuss such issues with their teachers, they certainly talk amongst themselves, offering one another substantial support and encouragement, which, as Henry Kingsbury has demonstrated is a significant ingredient within the culture of a music department (Kingsbury 1988, 1991). However, it seems that in order for the music lesson to remain a positive learning environment, the teacher needs to be aware of these struggles and accept responsibility for some measure of personal interaction in a student's life, certainly doing everything possible to enhance a student's

freedom to approach him/her for resolution of difficulties which are bound to arise in such an intimate relationship. This may be as small as engaging differences in points of view with a student's previous teachers, or as large as answering a student's discomfort with what the teacher requires of them. Regardless, there seems to be little value in pretending the lesson is a "private" affair when it so clearly is connected to other voices, and ultimately is connected to a practice of the musical arts that is public and permanent (Goehr, 111).

The silent conflicts

Professional sensibilities set forth by the institution and the society at large further complicate the articulation of these tensions resulting from the complex constitution of the "private" lesson. Both teachers and students struggle to express these problems, even to objective parties, let alone to one another. There seems to be a reticence to engage such tensions because they necessarily become at some level personal, not strictly "professional." This leads to my second conclusion: that these tensions not only result from the complexities in expectations and realizations of the "private" lesson, but more fundamentally because the music lesson is approached as a formalized space, not as a dynamic and unique encounter between two people and all their personal, historical, and unknown richness. Both teacher and student would typically assume that s/he knows what the lesson is about. In order to create an environment in which these tensions can more easily resolve themselves, both teacher and student would need to approach the lesson as strangers. Each would do well to assume that s/he does not know what the lesson is about, does not know what repertoire is reasonable and appropriate, does not understand what to expect of the Other, does not know what the Other expects of him/her,

does not know what will be learned, and more importantly, does not know how it will be learned.

My concern with reconstructing the music lesson aligns me with the discourse of critical pedagogy which variously theorizes about and argues for more progressive and radical pedagogical practice, although the success with which these practices eventuate into practical realities is arguable. These theories and arguments are themselves complex and not without both theoretical and practical tensions, but scholars herein at least seek to explore the *how* of learning, not just the *what*. Paulo Freire is one such scholar whose work has been influential in this regard, and who argues for the transformation of the classroom which is similar to my vision for the music lesson.

> Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis--in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously--can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped. (quoted in hooks 1994, 54)

The onus for establishing this kind of approach it would seem falls largely to the teacher because of the cultural position of authority s/he occupies. A student who has not experienced more progressive pedagogy would typically approach the lesson passively, placing him/herself in the teacher's hands, hoping, expecting, assuming the teacher will make something out of him/her, and that the main job of a "good" student is to adopt the teacher's ideas without question, and seek the teacher's validation for his/her own ideas. Unfortunately, many teachers have traditionally depended on students' passivity and feel uncomfortable or threatened by a student who has cultivated and acquired ideas of his/her own and is capable of some degree of autonomy.

Critical pedagogies aspire to develop such students, although even committed critical pedagogues admit that the practice of these ideals is often risky and uncomfortable (Gore 1993). A change of pedagogical approach seems to require articulation and discussion between teacher and student in order to accomplish its goals and the process of change is never easy, even when it is communicated creatively with respect and humility.

Traditional approaches to the need for change in a university music student on the other hand have often been destructive and even abusive. One student I interviewed had a horrendous university experience of music and to this day finds it difficult to enjoy playing. She recounted coming to university and at her first lesson being asked by her teacher for a list of the repertoire she had played in the previous three years. She had been with a teacher previously who encouraged her to learn as much music as possible; she estimated that at any given time, she would be working on at least fifteen pieces. So she had pages of repertoire that she had played in the last three years. Her teacher scoffed at this list when it was presented, and as much as said, "That's fine, but now we'll show you how really to play." One of major changes thrust on the student was a drastic reduction of the number of pieces she was working on, from somewhere over fifteen to four. These four pieces were all she was allowed for the entire year of lessons, although she confessed to me that she secretly worked on other stuff to keep herself going.

This proved to be the tip of a formidable iceberg of conflicts she was to encounter. After more than a year of very stressful lessons, in desperation the student requested the administration for a change of teacher and after some resistance was assigned a new teacher. At her first performance for this new teacher, the teacher announced that "If there's one thing we can work on this

year, it's to change your sound, to expand your sound." Things went along somewhat better for awhile. But the student slowly began to become frustrated. The student recalled:

> It was very gradual. I just stopped feeling. I felt like I was trudging slower and slower and slower, and it was getting harder and harder and harder, and there was no music left. Every sound was being analyzed and I just never did it right ...but I think that the end for me was that I lost the motivation to play. I never wanted to be the divine interpreter of Beethoven sonatas. I just wanted to be moved, and I realized that it takes preparation and logical thought and all the things [my teacher] did so much of, but underneath it all, there has to be something in me that says, 'I want it to sound this way.' ...I lost all that.

One of the issues about which a student often feels s/he must not argue or question but must simply comply, is the choice of repertoire. Of all the instruments for which music has been written, the piano repertoire is one of the largest. From this vast repertoire, a core of "meat and potatoes" repertoire has been established historically as central and absolutely necessary to every pianist's repertoire; there simply are no vegetarians, so to speak. This process is lousy with political agendas which for many years, as I understand it from a relative newcomer's perspective, were not brought into musical discussions. Music was thought to transcend social issues like racial discrimination, class dominance, and the privilege of one's gender. Excellence was a category thought to be innate to a piece of music, and the "timeless classics" --always in terms of a "musical work" or product (á la Lydia Goehr)--were such by virtue of their intrinsically higher quality. When these agendas are institutionalized, an evaluation of students at least partially by what repertoire they are playing eventuates. A student is not taken seriously unless s/he is studying first of all musical compositions selected from this standard repertoire, and secondly

pieces which are recognized to represent a certain degree of difficulty.[13] Students and teachers alike in the music institution are measured to some degree according to their repertoire. For example, when a pianist auditions for a university position as an applied piano teacher, it will be more impressive to play the big "he-pieces" from the repertoire (e.g., the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, Gaspard de la Nuit, the Liszt B-minor Sonata) than it would be to play distinctive renditions of "she-pieces" of the repertoire (e.g., the Children's Corner, Moment Musicaux, or Chopin Nocturnes).

This issue of choice of repertoire arose in one conversation with a student and seemed to intersect with another important assumption, which combined to produce for this student a conflict that remained hidden in the music lesson context, but became increasingly problematic for the student. Her entire third year of university is marred by her struggle to play one of the imposing sonatas written by Chopin. She explained: "It's funny how one piece can really destroy your life, because it was the main piece I was playing the whole year and I based my entire school life around this piece. It was too hard, and I still think it's too hard. I don't think I'd like to play it again for six or seven years." She told me that her teacher chose the piece for her, and she felt she could not argue, even though her instinct when she first listened to a recording of the piece was that, as beautiful as it was, and as much as she wanted to play it, she didn't think she "had it in her" at the time. The teacher's choice of repertoire for this student was undoubtedly multi-faceted and complex, but because evaluation in this culture seems to be based at least partially on the repertoire a person plays, a potential danger seems to exist for teachers to

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[13] As a woman, I remember feeling some combination of amusement and pity when I heard particularly my male student friends talking about what pieces they were playing much as my non-musical brothers would talk about how much iron they pumped that day or who kicked whose ass in the hockey game. Music has its own special breed of machismo.

compete with one another or with the rest of the musical world by making sure that students are playing the "big" repertoire, without accurately assessing the cost to the student.

Regardless of a student's aspirations and intentions toward music or the playing of his/her instrument, it is assumed that everyone will perform regularly in "repertoire (rep.) classes" and "juries" at the end of each term. Much of what happens in the music lesson is aimed at producing successful public performances in these two main venues. In addition, students majoring in performance must perform a "junior" recital in the third year, followed naturally by a "senior" recital in the fourth year. Serious fourth year students will need to consider preparing an audition program to take to schools of choice for further study. Even students not on a performance track often feel pressure to give a recital or to play a certain kind of repertoire in order to be taken seriously as a musician by their teachers--especially their applied music teacher--, by their peers, and by the institution.

The stress seems to be produced by the combination of these elements: very difficult repertoire and the student's felt expectation that s/he needs to "pull it off" in a public performance within the year. Furthermore, there is often felt to be a great deal at stake when one performs anything publicly, let alone a piece that the student feels is too hard. The whole experience becomes risky and terrifying for the performer, and to a lesser degree for the audience. When the apparent goal of the music lesson and a student's personal practice time is a product difficult enough and sufficiently well performed to be worthy of formal public performance, students testify to feeling consumed by "the piece."

One of the conflicts which is articulated over and over by the conflicts and assumptions already mentioned is between institutional objectives and

procedures, on the one hand, and the establishment of a music lesson which is better able to adapt to individuals on the other hand. In one conversation with a group of students, I initiated both some reflection on how their pre-university expectations were or were not realized, as well as some fantasizing about what could be better about the experience of earning a music degree at university. One older student who had a large studio of students in her home came to university expecting the same creative teaching experience that she and her local teacher colleagues strove to offer their students. She reflected "I guess because I'm a teacher, I thought the teachers here would be like we were, only more so. And they're actually less so in the teacher sense, but more in the musician sense." But the same student offered a complementary reflection on the experience which took the spotlight off the teacher and put it on the institution.

> I don't know that university teachers have to be anything different than what they are, because [sigh] I think the university is a place for higher learning. It's not a place that is supposed to fix you up, or wreck you; you're supposed to get what you can out of it. Even though my own philosophy of teaching is such that I would always think about my teaching, I think that for a university teacher who does not think this way, and feels no need to change, then it's up to the students to get what they can out of it. Certainly a university music department is not the place for everybody; definitely, definitely not... I don't know that there is such a thing as a humane music department. I don't know if it's possible. They just need bodies to fill the program.

The institution's responsibility to the individual is not a new conflict. Her comment seems to me either immensely gracious or pathetically resigned. The authority of the institution seems to have a significant centerpoint in the relationship between the applied teacher and student, although is not limited to this arena. I will never forget one university teacher's openly declaring in a

classroom that the students at the University of Alberta were "not up to the standard" of a school like McGill, clearly resenting the fact that he was teaching at a school with "lower standards." What this teacher did not know was that there were students sitting in the class that had been accepted to the program at McGill and had chosen to come instead to the University of Alberta. Such explicitly derogatory comments, as well as more implicit expectations of standards to which students feel they must measure up, need to be owned by the institution of higher learning, and in the best interests of the student, tempered with some compassion at some level, quite possibly in the music lesson. But as Jennifer Gore (1993, p.8) astutely argues with regard to the academy's concrete political commitment to differentiation and growth in the discourses of feminist and critical theory, I would like to point out that any commitment to re-evaluating the means and goals of music pedagogy at the university faces a struggle against the competitive impulse of both academic culture and society as a whole.

It is very easy for a student to feel that s/he is being "messed with." This is not the kind of change that I am advocating. It seems that in order for positive and constructive change to occur in the student (and not less in the teacher, although that is not a part of the university mandate), the music lesson environment must be established actively as a new experience, concerned with change, yes, but change which is rooted in the student's history -- past, present, and future. As important as any change which may occur in the music lesson is the ability in the student's mind to distinguish between "who I am" and "who the teacher is." A teacher may sincerely want a student to increase in his/her confidence and power to play; but if the music lesson is not established as an environment in which obstacles to that goal can be articulated, understood, and

overcome, the student will continue passively to obey the teacher's suggestions and to relinquish his/her abilities and even musical destiny into the teacher's hands. Or the student will crash --will become so frustrated and discouraged that s/he will lose the desire to play at all. The process of establishing a more interactive, personal--vulnerable--and less formalized lesson environment is difficult and other critical pedagogues have voiced their fear upon realizing what a significant influence they potentially have on a student, such that the entire course of his/her life could change. Not to mention the battle it is for some teachers to allow students' voices to exist unsilenced, unbelittled and unpunished for voicing a different point of view, or for struggling to accept a project or concept. It is one thing to theorize about interactive classrooms and learning environments; in some cases it is quite another to act in such a way as to promote them concretely.

The Music Lesson and Transcendence

> *"All music is caught between preservation of the old ways and redefinition in the present. The new musicians recognize this tension -- it is the dramatic subtext of global music. They are articulate about it, and for the most part they have come to a consensus: we must honor our sources. The elders don't want us to be them, they want us to be us, but we must know their story, and remember it, and understand ours as a continuation of theirs."*
>
> -- W.A. Mathieu; liner notes of CD *Planet Soup* (1995)

The conflict of "standards" brings me to the final summary of my observations of the music lesson and provides a transition into a theoretical inquiry of how and why "transcendence" is established as the goal of musical knowledge and experience. I will include observations of three different aspects of transcendence in the music lesson, but first some contextualization is warranted.

If one were to group together all the musicians of Canada, for example,

and create from them a continuum of musical literacy, i.e., people who can read some form of written music, the musical culture at a university would represent the extreme of the greatest literacy, albeit limited to a certain type of written notation. University music cultures would cease to exist without written notation. It is variously referred to as "the notes," "the score," "the music," "the book," or "what the composer indicated." The opposite extreme in the continuum would represent musicians to whom a written musical sign would mean nothing, who construct their world of music according to a code which does not involve written signs as the main point of reference. There are important differences between the two extremes of the continuum, not in terms of sophistication, or complexity, or excellence, but in terms of the mode of music's preservation, and hence the possibility for repetition (and conversely, the scope for transformation). The written code significantly impacts the structure of the music lesson.

Typically, teaching a student to read and render the score "correctly" is the teacher's chief responsibility in the music lesson. Right from the first lesson where the student begins to learn his/her "do, re, mi's," so to speak, right through to the university music lesson and beyond, correctly translating the written code into "what the composer intended" has traditionally been the student's main concern.

However, this process is not as transparent as it sounds. Music is not just a matter of matching the right signs with the right notes on the piano, anymore than language can be described comprehensively as correct spelling and syntax. Music is thought by musicians and music appreciators alike to be every bit as expressive as spoken language, in fact more so, because music does not function as language does to designate objects. Furthermore, music exists

primarily as an historical collection of "musical works." As a result, as Lydia Goehr has engagingly argued (1992, p.3), "musical works," while at least partially defined and designated by their written form, are not identical with their score. The "expressive" properties cannot be attributed to the score but can only be realized in performance, which in turn is also not equal to the "musical work." Just as written language has been separated traditionally into signifiers and signifieds and adapted to scientific models of "objective" analysis, the "art" of music has been separated out of the "science" of music in formal music learning, the "art" of music supposedly the chief domain of the music lesson, and academic music disciplines more "objective" and scientific. Hence, the music lesson concerns itself with realizing the expressive properties of the musical work in a performance taking place in real time.

However, the music lesson does not concern itself only with the "art" of music; the music lesson depends completely on the so-called scientific skills of reading, analyzing, interpreting, and internalizing the written details of the score, such that the "musical work" is honoured and respectfully repeated. Hence the first observation is the place of written musical notation in the music lesson. One may observe both how it is talked about and how it is practiced.

With such ambiguities regarding the existence of the music in question, one may well imagine that linguistic practices surrounding the written score would also be somewhat puzzling. It is not uncommon for a student to ask the teacher if s/he wants "the music" if playing from memory; at the same time the teacher may speak of "the music" as being a way of rendering the score that is connected to an emotional context in the student, as distinct from "the notes," as in the aforementioned decried adage --"first you learn the notes, then you learn the music." The teacher may encourage goals of playing "beyond the music,"

much as an actor is coached to go beyond the words of a script. One thing that is common to all the references is a sense of limitation in the notation. The fact that we study music performance at all would seem to indicate that music in written form is an inadequate form of expression. We need to translate it into sound.

One device the teacher often uses is helping the student to translate the music into words. Teachers and students alike seem to feel awkward about this. Putting words to wordless music seems trite or contrived or feminine -- in some way an inadequate representation of the music. In one lesson after a student had played Debussy's *L'Isle Joyeuse* , the teacher commented, "We should talk about the piece. I suspect that you like it." The student agreed. The teacher continued by asking the student, "Can you tell me why? Where does it take you?" The student answered as if he had already thought about it a good deal, "I see pictures: we're out at sea, morning sunrise, maybe dolphins, everything is waking up...." The teacher interjected, "Ooooo, that's good," obviously pleased. "...there's an airplane flying over the sea, and then there's a bit of a storm, a tornado on the island ahead, the trees are blowing furiously. And then the sun comes out again in the end." The teacher commented enthusiastically, "That's very good. Now, if you were to write this down...", the student finished for the teacher "...it would be your opinion." "Yes," the teacher concurred, "feelings, which are very important when you are talking about the meaning of music." But the teacher then went on in the lesson to help the student "learn to look at the score without prejudice," i.e., not to allow his imagination to minimize or neglect the composer's indications. On the one hand the teacher was pleased with the student's articulations and imaginations and encouraged them, but in the end they could not overshadow or conflict with

some universal sense couched as "what the composer indicated." At one point the teacher gave, as it were, a rule of thumb, "Just remember generally in music, unless a composer indicates a pause or a *rit.*, dynamics vary but the pulse goes on."

Turning the music into words is useful on one hand to stimulate the student's imagination, but only so long as the student controls his/her imagination with respect for "what the composer indicated." That is the balance which it seemed the teacher sought to inspire in the lessons which I observed. The presupposition is that these compositions are musical "masterworks" and have plenty of room within them just the way the composer wrote them for us to put our imaginations to work and "make them our own" so to speak. To fail to realize the score in any way is to disrespect the greatness of the compositions. This is a complex agenda which is too involved to tackle in detail in the scope of this paper, but which Lydia Goehr explores provocatively in her discussion of the regulative effects of "the work-concept."

Usually, however, the harder job for the teacher from my perspective as an observer was to get a student to articulate his/her imagination. The teacher described to me in one conversation the difficulty encountered sometimes when trying to inspire the imagination and creativity of students, most of whom "seem to operate according to the philosophy 'What do I have to do to get it, and how will I be punished if I don't.'" Students seem to have learned in earlier years of study to "obey" the score in a sort of designatory one-dimensional way. In the lesson mentioned some time previously, in which the student characterized the music as "sad," the teacher, instead of pursuing her word, tried to get the student to think in more complex categories:

> *I think we're thinking of the same thing, but we're using different words.* To categorize something as 'sad' seems to necessarily contrast it with

> 'happy.' There is a tremendous exuberance in sadness, tremendous passion -- 'let's smell the roses while we can.' It is as ineffective as talking about categories of *forte* and *piano*. That ignores all the things that can happen in *piano* -- anger, excitement, longing, etc.

While the comment seemed an attempt to validate the student (while at the same time stripping her descriptive label from the discussion), it initiated a distinct move away from local meaning toward more universal terms. The ensuing conversation focussed not on what may have made the student call the piece "sad," but on a more universal and sophisticated definition of "sad" that undoubtedly served the teacher's purposes better than the student's. In fact, the student's purposes were never really explored.

In another lesson, the teacher articulated another aspect of interaction with the written by instructing the student "Whenever anything is repeated it has to be lived. It has to be like life. It is an active thing, you don't photocopy it five times." The most interesting thing about this instruction was that it was important enough for the teacher to write it in the student's score. One could understand that merely to be a means of jogging the student's memory, but the linking of "a musical law" with the action of writing it down seemed indicative of the weightier rank of the written in its power to evoke obedience. It is not uncommon for the teacher to write important instructions in the student's score.

The writing of musical laws aside, the connecting of the written with the "lived" will be a significant theoretical point in contextualizing the power of words with the power of speakers and how the right to signify comes about: Michael Gardiner (1992) with the aid of Bakhtin explains how written codes tend to be "frozen" more easily by authoritarian styles of governance, distilled into dogma, and interpreted in a purely theoretical way, quantifiably correct according to certain agendas or codes, but unconvincing according to others.

This conflict of codes was exemplified by two wonderful comments the teacher made in another lesson, a complementary kind of "musical law," which incidentally was not written in the score. One lesson was spent trying to explain rhythm to a student as something more than correct durational values. The climactic comment was:

> There's one thing I think you should know about rhythm. You cannot control rhythm with that wonderful IQ that you have. You can guide it, and prepare it, but rhythm is like being in motion. After your brain sends up the instruction, it's the natural forces in your body that make it happen. We smart people have got to remember that we can't do everything with that part of our brains.

Later in the lesson it was even stronger: "Get your brain out of the way! I want to feel something -- this is not a theory class."

One of the most important maxims the teacher consistently sought to emphasize was that music needs to connect with life in a holistic way. However, this could not involve ignoring (i.e. disrespecting) the written code, or taking it any less seriously. At the same time, reading music and realizing it successfully could not be a passive activity, rather an active one that did not transgress certain ill-defined limitations. Students are taught that music, as with any written code, needs the performer's active imagination and his/her concentrated and committed bodily presence in order to be as significant as it can be, even though the end-product often seems to strive to obliterate (i.e. transcend) the body of the performer. (Goehr 1992, Cusick 1994) Treatement of this issue varies considerably from teacher to teacher. Some teachers do not emphasize "the emotional content" of the music and of music making as much as others, but in the lessons I observed it came up over and over, and I suspect that music's emotional content is not a foreign concept to anyone in a music department. Degrees of emphasis aside, this delicate and ill-defined balance

between the music student's creative interaction and respectful repetition is one source of difficulty and frustration.

Thus emerges the second observation of transcendence in the lesson, specifically the linking of the "emotional content" of the music to a superior or transcendent performance. This issue is closely related to imagination and "living" texts within written ones. The biggest question concerning this issue (to which I do not have an answer) is why emotion would be linked to transcendent performance or "the music's ultimate meaning." It would seem that expression of emotion would emphasize exactly the opposite of transcendence or other-worldiness, namely our vulnerable embodied existence.

The music lesson itself is an emotionally charged place. Comments previously cited, such as "being moved by the music," and "feelings being important when we talk about the meaning of music," are delivered in a mode characterized by strong feeling. As a student, I used to guage my emotional strength before my lesson; if I was feeling even remotely fragile emotionally, I knew I should cancel my lesson because if there were going to be tears, that is where they would happen, and I usually wanted to spare both my teacher and myself the experience. Many students, both those I talked to for this project and others I didn't talk to, could easily cite lessons where they left in tears.[14]

In the music lesson, one frequently encounters references to emotion, not necessarily always in the music itself, but in the playing of it. For example, the teacher in one lesson asked the student to comment on his own performance in a specific way: "Can you tell me where it is you might have more fun than you're having?" Such a comment reveals that the meaning of a piece of music, both for the performer and for the audience, may be nothing more profound than

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[14] The emotions can go to the other extreme as well, although seemingly less often --a student can leave a lesson "on top of the world."

"difficult." This is not a worthy goal for a musical performance; in fact, the goal for the performer, if not to experience ease and pleasure in the performance, is at least to create for the audience the illusion of ease and pleasure. The amount of fun a student has playing a piece is one way emotion occupies the text of the lesson.

Other times emotion is articulated as "expression" and is linked with concepts of *rubato* and spontaneous agogic accents. In this regard, some teachers teach students to think of "expression" as something to add to the notes, "the finishing touches," so to speak. The teacher I observed decried this approach with vehemence, declaring that it simply doesn't work, and begging the student to "leave that devil behind you." In one lesson in which the student was "overdoing" the elasticity of the rhythmic structure in her effort to "make it beautiful," the teacher diplomatically criticized her playing by poking fun at a well-known performer who was infamous for these laboured "expressive" renditions. The teacher labelled the effect the Constipated Buffalo Syndrome (which resulted in laughter) and explained to the student that "expression" ought never to be confused with rhythmic distortion. Furthermore, the teacher explained that "expression" ought never to be added to a mechanical rendition of the notes and rhythms. Each tiny little detail --something as simple as the movement from one note to another-- according to the teacher, needed the student to hear it as beautiful and in turn to ask the audience to hear it as beautiful, including details such as the evenness of the rhythm. Often the teacher would draw attention in a dramatic way to something the student was translating as mundane, for example, "love the rhythm here, love the evenness of it." While this approach could be understood to be idiosyncratic, or merely the opinions of one school of interpretation, I observe that these ideas filter into

other schools of interpretation and other teacher's approaches all the time, however less prominently. The demonstrative tone of a teacher's voice as s/he coaches the details of the music to expressive life compels students to invest emotional energy into details which, until the teacher articulates them with such obvious emotional energy, usually escape the student's notice.

Memorization is the final aspect of "emotional content" which I wish to highlight in this expressive performance tradition. It is most common for solo pianists to perform without using the written music. In fact it has become a "standard" with which jury members are able to legitimate a student's performance. Most teachers will encourage, if not insist, on memorized performance in an effort to produce completely internalized and "personal" renditions that are not interrupted with noisy page turns. It seems to be a part of "transcending the written." But one thing which is not often articulated is what the supposed "freedom from the score" might produce in terms of psychological trauma. The fear of "a memory slip" during a performance (making it less than perfect) is not a small part of students' fear of performing. This fear, practically speaking, is a formidable part of the emotional text of many performances, although part of one's job as a performer is to disguise it so it is not projected to the audience. In the case of a memorization failure, the result is often publicly humiliating and in some measure devastating to the performer. The negative memory of that event becomes a constitutive part of every subsequent performing effort, making such occasions rarely enjoyable for the student performer.

The emotion clearly is not inherent in the musical object; the emotion is in the person(s) performing it and hearing it, and is expressed through a person's relationship to the object, to the experience of playing it, and to the person(s)

listening, however this relationship may be constituted. I would argue that an emotional performance could be thought not a "transcendent" experience at all, but rather a concretely social experience of generosity, vulnerability, and community. The humility that it requires to play with personal investment in the beauty or angst or whatever the music seems to bring out of a person is a little like transcendence turned on its head.

The third and final observation of transcendence is that the music lesson is characterized by a fixation with "perfection," unattainable perfection. Musical mistakes come in all shapes and sizes. There are musical sins of omission and musical sins of commission: lapses in concentration, fingers sloppily placed between keys, inaccurate leaps, errors in rhythm, forgetting the key signature, using the wrong fingering, playing too fast or too slow, not observing the dynamics, and memory slips, to name a few. Mistakes for many performers -- students and teachers-- are the chief enemies of a transcendent "other-worldly" experience of music. If a performer is able to get through the score --from memory-- with only minor infractions, s/he is content with something good. But the real goal is a "perfect" performance.

Several times in lessons, however, the student would perform, cursing and groaning at every "mistake," and the teacher would not seem even to notice. In one lesson, the student finished playing and the teacher said, "It's gorgeous!" The student immediately apologized, "I don't usually make all these mistakes." The teacher responded, "I know a few things that may help you. Oh, it's not the mistakes. Just listen to it here..., don't confuse expression with rhythmic distortion...." The teacher assumed that the mistakes were neither normal nor "the problem." The teacher seemed to be listening to a bigger picture of the performance, putting energy into that to which the student didn't

seem to be listening, not into things which the student already knew were wrong.

Outside of the private practice room, the music lesson seems to be the safest place for students to play with mistakes. Every other public performing situation becomes increasingly risky and must be as mistake-free as possible. For students who struggle to get beyond reading the music in a designatory way, a performance with few mistakes, especially negligible ones like accidental wrong notes, is as successful as they strive to be. But most students at university have learned that playing distinctively and with a great deal of personal investment is more important than getting the right notes. Much of what happens at the lesson at university is aimed at expanding the student's concept of the music, not at correcting the wrong notes.

However, how these concept expansions are constituted theoretically is perhaps not so important as how they are learned and how they are taught practically. It is difficult for teachers to introduce new concepts to students and enable them to feel that this is a profitable journey, without being manipulative. What a teacher may label as "small" or "limited" concepts or practices in a student are usually derived from a student's previous teachers, and many times have become habitual and unconscious for the student. For example, the teacher worked for most of the year to get one student to think of rhythm as expressive, not just mechanical. But the student was so intent on "getting the notes" and "getting it memorized" that right until the very end of the year, the student resisted the teacher's instructions "to play the rhythm evenly," "to think of the rhythm as not mechanical but as expressive," preferring instead to continue "to count it right." Consciously or subconsciously, the student may well have thought "I don't have time to change that drastically -- my recital's coming."

Even with what the observer may perceive to be an encouraging and personable approach by the teacher, the student may be unable or unwilling to cooperate, as seemed to be the case in the following extract from my field notes: "We're not achieving the appropriate balance between what you are capable of doing and what you are doing." The teacher speaks gently, reassuringly touching the student's arm at the keyboard. "Not to get you away from expression. It's just to put this expression of yours into a rhythmic context." The student was still not ready to absorb the new concept, for whatever reason, eliciting comments from the teacher like "I'm convinced the mechanical part of the brain is the biggest downfall of mankind." A student's receptivity is difficult for a teacher to measure, and ultimately a teacher can do only what the student is able and willing to do.

In addition to preparing the student to be content to undo things before s/he tries to do better things, the other challenge for a teacher is to make an "expanded concept" seem possible and specific to the student, however difficult and painful its implementation may be. For example, the student mentioned earlier in the paper, whose teacher told her that they were going to work that year to "expand her sound," reflected later about the experience that it seemed the teacher wasn't talking about her sound at all, but some generic, ideal, recording-worthy sound, which in her words "was way out there, and of course, it's not attainable actually."

"Perfection" in a primarily performative context is subject to variables, the uncontrollable events of "real life" (for example, if a student's father dies unexpectedly), which upset the perfect concentration, physical condition, and environment necessary to produce publicly the performance a student has collectively over weeks and months conceived it to be. One of the practical

results of the philosophical work-concept (á la Lydia Goehr) seen at the level of the music lesson and resulting public performance(s) is the seeming expectation to transcend one's own life in order to achieve a certain standard of performance. This can be crippling. It is the nature of the musical ritual to bring everything down to one moment: do or die. If the point of the whole musical experience is not more than producing perfect musical objects for public consumption, a person may very well feel unable to play. This is the pressure which eventually persuades some students that they don't need the stress of such a life, and persuades them not only to choose a different profession, but not uncommonly to give up playing their instruments altogether, even for domestic pleasure. One of the questions at hand is: How does this happen, and how can teachers and students alike keep it from happening? Or can they?

Power/Knowledge

In an effort to address this question more theoretically, I begin with the notion of power. Michel Foucault is one theorist who has thoroughly explored "power" (though of course, from his embodied perspective), and his descriptions of power relations within different types of regimes are most provocative. Power for Foucault does not seem to be an inherently bad thing, and I so far do not disagree. Power is mostly productive (Foucault 1977: 194), that is, it causes things to appear. He strongly opposes representations of power which construct it as only negative and repressive:

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (1980: 119)

In his critical history of the development of prisons and the understandings which sustain them, Foucault explicitly connects penal and educational institutions on the grounds of the "disciplinary" approach each exhibited in previous and current centuries toward the individuals within them. He later explains that his goal was to demonstrate a direct relationship between the establishment of these institutions and an exponential increase in the societal value of productivity (1980: 119). I was particularly interested, from the standpoint of musical knowledge evaluation, in his analysis of the practice and role of "the examination" in knowledge production according to a disciplinary regime, and with this the binary of punishment and reward. Foucault would see punishment to be the other side of gratification or reward, which seems to imply

a spectrum of good and evil[15] along which individuals are situated by powerful people. Behaviour and performance are defined in terms of this universal spectrum. "Moreover," writes Foucault, "it is possible to quantify this field and work out an arithmetical economy based on it. A penal accountancy, constantly brought up to date, makes it possible to obtain the punitive balance sheet of each individual" (1977: 180). Hence, each act may be evaluated on some precise basis, and distributed in terms of a grade, enabling some means of comparison between examinees, some heirarchy of quality, and some basis for punishment or reward. While there is a sense in which informal evaluation of all human conduct according to certain statistical norms is accomplished by social consensus, I am more interested at this point in formal processes of institutions such as schools and prisons, which rank individuals. The primary function of examinations of either type, according to Foucault, was/is to categorize "normal," taking for granted the necessity of a context of heirarchy from which "objectivity" could be exercised about such a category.

> It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. (1977: 184)

While a figuration of power emphasizing merely productivity is in my view inadequate for talking about power structures in music education, Foucault's description is certainly consistent with my experience of institutions for music

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[15] This is to state it strongly. One may find it less problematic to construct the spectrum in terms of desireable and undesireable, or true and false, although each of these labels has its own baggage.

learning. It is at least partially the formalization of the process of music evaluation with which I am uneasy, because it requires no "human" grounds of accountability from those in power, no commitment to a dialogic (or better yet, polylogic) account of *what* is produced. This results in a primarily competitive orientation for those involved. It's one thing to say that power isn't always about repression; it's another to find a way of talking about the demoralization effected by certain activities of the powerful over the less powerful in the process of producing "punitive balance sheets," however provisional this repression may be seen to be. (How provisional it is, of course, is also contestable.)

For example, one such demoralization in music education is common to students' experiences of the performance "jury" which typically happens at least once per academic year. The full term for the event is "juried examination", significantly shortened to "jury." This immediately underscores the actions of the examination committee, and obscures the actions of the individual being examined: the jury committee is acting; the examinee is primarily being acted upon. From a student's point of view, this produces important psychological ramifications for which there is no official account. Furthermore, the word is more commonly associated with a context of court examination riddled with notions of ultimate authority, judgment, fairness, law, justice, "objectivity," and with such troubling binaries as guilty/innocent, punishment/reward, and incarceration/freedom. It seems ironic and, for me unsatisfactory, that in music, "jury" is the term chosen for the final evaluation of what is on some other level understood, experienced and, in fact, encouraged within musical discourse as a highly personal utterance: expressions of intimacy and beauty, a baring of one's soul. Such descriptions of musical performance are not an insignificant part of a larger cultural picture of musical experience which is valued for the

"transcendent" expression of human existence that musical performance is thought to render. When the evaluation of artistic activity is aligned conceptually with the process of law enforcement and prosecution designed to protect the world from harmful and destructive activity, a conflict results. To use the same paradigm for the examination of criminal guilt as for the quality of artistic potential and/or expression is even more inappropriate than equating apples and oranges: more like equating apples and cardboard boxes.

Institutionally speaking, juries produce competent performers, i.e. performers that can maintain concentration in stressful situations and execute the music with technical precision and stylistic integrity; juries separate the men from the boys.[16] Whether or not juries succeed in producing these performers as intended, my point is that institutionally this practice is protected by embracing certain stories and disregarding others. Institutions proudly proclaim the success stories of musicians who at one time studied in their school and now have some kind of career as a performer. These stories obviously reflect well on the school, the rationale being that the school's program ought to be credited with producing the person, the person of success. But that connection is almost always assumed by association, rarely substantiated with details, a prerogative only of the powerful. Furthermore, the much more common stories of disaster are not equally owned by the institution. You will not hear official accounts of musicians who not only abandoned careers in music, but abandoned music altogether because of their experience of music education. These stories are more difficult for the institution to own, although embracing them could quite possibly produce what Bakhtin would call multi-voiced dialogue that, if encouraged, may well be more constructive and productive

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16 While this is not the thrust of this paper, there are many practices and attitudes within musical discourse which can be understood to be inscribed by patriarchy.

than centuries of success-storytelling, necessarily transforming the structure and values of the institution in the process. When powerful entities refuse to respect and give voice to any person under their umbrella, repressive practices will be hidden by the official account of what is produced.

When the evaluation of knowledge allegedly produced in an examination, an activity of the powerful, is extracted out of the context of an educational process, knowledge can be theoretically construed as existing apart from human agency, as if either there could be knowledge without its embodiment in individuals, or as if the individual becomes essentialized as knowledge, measured only by officially sanctioned knowledge products. Hence concepts such as "standards of excellence" or "goals of perfection" are given credibility, though widely understood to be at best ideal. In the context of musical knowledge production and evaluation, these concepts are often part of that which debilitates and demoralizes, because they are both impossible to attain and very poorly articulated, while at the same time being produced and reproduced by the type of examinations and evaluations upheld by the institution.

There seems to be a silent conflict between what the institution administering examinations may intend them to produce, and what is produced in the experience of some students. For this reason, it seems inadequate to describe power as only that which produces things. A responsible description of power will include a sense of whose account --both of what is produced and how it is produced-- is given a voice, demonstrating sensitivity to issues of privilege by virtue of hierarchical position, i.e. where the voice is located in the structure. It will also be interested in giving voice to the silent gaps within any conflict discovered, for example, the conflicts produced by the practices of juried

examinations. It is in these respects I find Foucault's descriptions of power deficient.

While in Foucault's estimation, the forms of power changed as history transpired to concern themselves more with controlling the population in a bodily way so that "productive service" was ensured (1980: 125), the hierarchical nature of power structures, as far as I can tell, remains the same; that is, it is always hierarchical. With respect to the knowledge produced in institutions of higher education, Foucault traces a similar shift in roles of intellectuals. Formerly, there was an expectation to be "spokesman of the universal," interestingly, primarily in the form of writing; on the other hand, since World War II in his estimation, intellectuals have been expected to function in more specific and technically useful capacities (1980: 127).

> The figure in which the functions and prestige of this new intellectual are concentrated is no longer that of the 'writer of genius', but that of the 'absolute savant', no longer he who bears the values of all, opposes the unjust sovereign or his ministers and makes his cry resound even beyond the grave. It is rather he who along with a handful of others, has at his disposal, whether in the service of the State or against it, powers which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life. He is no longer the rhapsodist of the eternal, but the strategist of life and death. (1980: 129)

Transcendence looms large in this analysis. It strikes me that Foucault speaks from an elevated point of view which makes the reader believe that he can truly see the whole picture of intellectual trends across history. How he arrived at this view or the privilege of speaking in these terms is not disclosed. In order for him to assert "some years have now passed since the intellectual was called upon to play this [universal] role" (1980: 126), he himself takes on the role of universal spokesperson. Not only does he speak as universal historian, but he proposes a rethinking of the role of the specific intellectual as some kind of universal strategist; for example: "It seems to me that we are now

at a point where the function of the specific intellectual needs to be reconsidered" (1980: 130).

Lest I sound overly harsh in my disappointment with Foucault's analysis, let me be quick to acknowledge that maintaining an awareness of situatedness while giving voice to that which is at some level one's own point of view, is extremely difficult. I think that the illusion of "objectivity" which Foucault falls prey to may well be the logical product of autonomous power structures which have historically not been formally required to act with responsibility and respect for the multitude of voices which they represent. To borrow Jennifer Gore's description: there are structures argued for, and there are the structures of the argument, and they seem to conflict (1993, 5). This model of "discussion" unfortunately seems to be absorbed subconsciously, for as much as I wish to avoid it, I have had to fight it at every turn in the writing of this paper. I constantly feel unsure of the balance between uttering my point of view with conviction and strength as the voice of a seeker/possessor of knowledge, and maintaining a commitment to acknowledge the other voices which inform my own, voices which are both more and less powerful than my own, and voices which both agree and disagree with my own. The educational experience which I have known and the kind of knowledge it supports has not encouraged community-oriented values. Competition becomes dominant, resulting in what I believe is an unnecessary tension between assertion and a desire for other voices to be heard. Subjects and countersubjects are both necessary and valuable parts of polyphony.

There is some interesting territory between, on one hand, the analysis of the specific intellectual who "has at his disposal...powers which can benefit or irrevocably destroy life," and on the other hand, the way in which "true

discourses" are established. If one leaps from one to the other, one bypasses the important question of how meaning exists at all, and in light of that, how inevitable conflicts of meaning can be explored. Foucault appears to make this leap, although he does explore the nature of meaning in other discussions. At this point he simply asserts: "Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (1980: 131). It would seem important before proceeding to clarify what he means by the difficult and politically charged word "truth," and Foucault is careful to do this:

> There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth'--it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true'. (1980: 132)

Truth here is a process of truth production, not a conceptual object. Because of the close reciprocation between "truth" and "knowledge," there is in my mind value in applying this concept of truth to the governance of institutional knowledge production, specifically to the way we structure power institutionally. By the same logic, the practices of power which produce knowledge need to be understood as practically integrated with the knowledge which is produced; knowledge also needs to be understood as the ensemble of rules which govern the production of truth. For this reason, any effort to understand knowledge as a continuous process of arriving at articulations of meaning must, in my mind, value dialogue, necessitating of course, a conscious process. If such a concept would be taken seriously, I could envision at least two changes resulting. First, the process of formulating the ensemble of rules of which Foucault speaks, which govern decisions about truth and untruth in the context of knowledge

production, would need to involve dialogue between variously powerful people. It seems a shift would certainly result from the concept of "standards" of knowledge and performance to something much more process-oriented, a concept more like "pathways" or "journeys." Secondly, evaluations of knowledge (i.e. juries and examinations) could not be generic, but would need to be discussed and established on an individual basis, adapted to an individual process of becoming and knowing. The goal of knowledge production would have to be conceived in terms of self-reflective actions, not in terms of products: human beings will never be either concepts or objects.

This is not to say that every examination would necessarily need to be unique. If a given examination were well-structured, it likely could apply to more than one student. I am arguing for an education which strives to be more than dissemination of information, in which examinations would be thought of in terms of dialogical individuals and in turn experienced by individuals as dialogic and non-generic. If examinations were viewed this way, pedagogical processes would have to adapt accordingly. Until it is important to governing bodies that no individual feel unable or unworthy to speak, it seems there will be no practical reciprocity between power and knowledge, only an endless stream of pronouncements by the powerful, i.e., "objectivity." The accounts of harmful learning experiences which in fact did not facilitate learning, will continue to exist in silence and disempowerment. This obviously puts a greater onus on both teacher and student to embark on a transformational journey, one which will demand a high quality relationship of constant evaluation, disciplined self-awareness and respectful dialogue. I do not see any alternative if the so-called standards of knowledge and performance are to shift from being weapons of intimidation to being goals of inspiration.

A Reconstructed Music Lesson

The writings and practices of ethnographers have become some of my most useful tools in carrying out this project. One particularly fertile ethnographic article was James Clifford's analysis of Marcel Griaule's work among the Dogon people, from which emerged not only a sense of the history of ethnographic thought, but some very specific connections to my study of the music lesson. (See Appendix A) I believe it is safe to say that ethnography as a discipline has more or less passed the unseemly phase of growth in which Griaule was operating, and has, in my estimation, provided the academic community with some wonderful tools of reflexivity whereby dialogue can be generated between variously powerful groups of people, tools such as "participant observation" (Spradley 1980) and narratives which manifest the narrator. Whether or not the academic community chooses to use these tools is another question. Clifford summarizes his article:

> Fieldwork cannot appear primarily as a cumulative process of gathering 'experience,' or of cultural 'learning' by an autonomous subject. It must rather be seen as a historically contingent, unruly, dialogical encounter involving, to some degree, both conflict and collaboration in the production of texts. (1985: 152)

These tools have significantly changed the terrain of my own experience and the experiences of those I have encountered in observation and discussion. Griaule's experience provides a point of departure. Until he found his primary informant, Ogotemmêli, who eventually became indispensible to his work, Griaule methodically picked his informants to give him the kind of knowledge he had already decided he wanted, operating from certain presuppositions and consequent principles of selection. For example, Clifford notes that Griaule expressed a distrust of Christians, Muslims, and individuals

with too much prior contact with whites (1985: 137). This seems to indicate a pre-concept of "the authentic Dogon", existing at some time free from otherness, a notion of a natural state of purity which Griaule sought to protect from the "enemies" he had arbitrarily chosen. Otherness would be, for him, not only an enemy; it would be avoidable in one's effort to construct authentic master narratives. Griaule must have believed this or he would have been unable to risk his own presence among them for fear of contaminating this pre-existent, authentic reality. This concept of authenticity becomes a guiding principle for knowledge/text production in Griaule's process, and he is under no apparent compulsion to question its assumptions or its power.

As I contemplated Griaule's fundamental distrust of his informants, I experienced a strange sense of irony with respect to my own fieldwork in the music lesson. When I began my fieldwork in the cultural space of the music lesson, I was warned by various people with whom I chatted, significantly mostly professors, to beware how difficult I would find it to be "objective." There were times it seemed that my previous years of experience and understanding of the cultural space of the music lesson were thought to be a disadvantage rather than an advantage. I thought initially that they were afraid of being sabotaged by an "inside informer," which may well be part of their concern. They were undoubtedly aware, as was I, of how difficult it is to speak from a position of pain, particularly after having made that pain somewhat explicit. Significantly, it was this very pain which brought me to this theoretical project. It occurred to me after I read Clifford's article, however, that perhaps the cautioning professors were also acting in accordance with a power structure that valued a certain configuration of an "authentic" kind of text, and that I threatened to step outside it in pursuing this project. Although I never questioned their

productive/constructive aims, I had a greater sense of a conflict of power than of a collaboration of power in my --and strangely, my professors'-- efforts to produce a text. The question of "whose" text was being produced began to become a more important question. I very much wanted to be guided in my pursuits by those more experienced than I, but I also wanted to have a voice. Sometimes it seemed as if I was being told to choose.

Clifford's account of Griaule's process and especially his concluding summary as quoted above, has birthed in me a vision of a new way to construct and understand the music lesson. The music lesson has become a cultural field for me in this project. I have intentionally isolated it as a culture and approached it as a participant observer, seeking to construct it with ethnographic tools in terms of cultural values and practices. But what would disallow this same approach from being adopted by the participant actors in the culture, the individuals I have been observing? Are the ethical issues informing the work of an ethnographer any less relevant to the work of a teacher or a student in the music lesson? I have already sought to establish that certain texts are produced by the music lesson. What if both teacher and student entering the field of the music lesson could come to understand Clifford's conclusion that "fieldwork cannot appear primarily as a cumulative process"? In order to arrive at such an understanding, we would necessarily need to rethink the knowledge building which traditionally happens in the music lesson in new terms, in terms of the reciprocal relationships necessary to good fieldwork, instead of a formalized and predetermined means to a fixed end. Neither teacher nor student need think of themselves as isolated subjects, respectively imparting and gathering experience, skills, or knowledge; they could instead think of themselves as fieldworkers. I imagine a music lesson experience in

which both teacher and student understand that they are involved in an "historically contingent, unruly, dialogical encounter" which will necessarily involve conflict and collaboration in the production of texts. These texts would not be understood as already written, remaining only to be achieved; they are constantly and repeatedly produced and reproduced in the music lesson context, and ideally belong equally to student and teacher as they abide by principles of dialogic encounter.

I am aware that this analogy is threatened by huge obstacles, but I will appeal to it throughout the remainder of the project, as I grapple with the silent conflicts that I have found within present practices and structures. The music lesson in a university context has been issued a mandate to produce specific kinds of texts, ones perhaps easier to control and quantify than the ones that would be produced in my ideal music lesson. I would be interested in exploring the web of power that exists in an institution like a university music department, in which are caught administrators, teachers, and students, but not with equal constraint. We need a way of describing how the asymmetry of the web of power relations comes to be, by which some texts receive privilege, deciding and decided by the means of producing them and the procedures used to evaluate or measure their production. It is unclear to me at this point whether a shift such as I have sketched in fantasy could be initiated at the level of the music lesson, or if such a music lesson would need the support of more comprehensive structures before it could happen. I am really imagining a transformation of the university community, one whose ensemble of rules by which texts come into existence is more grounded in dialogue, less dependent on fixed meanings and controlled outcomes, and more committed to structures which anticipate and plan for the changes inevitable in human community.

Meaning

Indeed, questions of meaning stand at the crux of this paper, not primarily questions of *what* things mean, but *how* things mean what they mean. For this reason I wish to demonstrate why meaning, particularly the so-called meaning of a musical work as it is articulated in the music lesson, needs to be understood to be a reciprocal process between "what" and "how." As language acts are most obviously the way we construct and express meaning, meaning in language provides a bridge into discussions of meaning in more abstract terms such as music.

The nature of meaning is one of the richest questions of any discussion, and ironically one which I find often omitted in university classrooms. Charles Taylor, in his inspiring book *Human Agency and Language*, addresses this difficult question within a broader context than that of language, although language occupies an important presence in his discussion because of his standpoint that humans are above all "the language animal" (Taylor 1985: 216). He seems most concerned throughout the book to establish the peculiarity of human agency. This point of departure helps him to explain why language can seem puzzling when viewed as an entity disconnected from a human context, as some linguistic scholars have attempted to do by bracketing the sounds and syntax from the context of language use, and trying to explain signification strictly from that analysis. While there may be value in such studies for other purposes, Taylor would argue that one cannot begin, with language as an object, to provide a satisfactory explanation for the way that human agents use language, which is but one of many tools of signification. Human agency for Taylor has everything to do with what questions are being asked when we ask questions of meaning. He constitutes human agency most simply as the ability

to establish terms and criteria by which to evaluate worth, value, and moral order, not in disinterested analysis, but out of the significance and values inherent in our existence: life is about stuff. For Taylor, meaning is the core of human community, without which we would have no basis from which to reflect on and articulate conceptions of "truth."

If one's actions, including speech actions, can be seen to emerge out of a human agency which articulates and, ideally, exchanges meanings, then it does not follow to think of language as a means of merely designating objects; rather one might integrate into the concept of language the activities which produce it. Taylor suggests that language must be approached as primarily expressive, within the same range of activities as painting, music-making, and dance (1985: 218). Or to say it another way, language is the activity of speaking, not an aggregate of linguistic products. Meaningful language is a live event, necessarily involving at least two, a speaker and an audience, a giver and a receiver, an address and within that address an anticipation of a response (Gardiner 1992: 151). This is not a new idea, but one expressed by Wilhelm von Humboldt nearly two hundred years ago when he theorized language to be *energeia*, not *ergon*--an activity, not a work (Taylor 1985: 232, 256). I wish to highlight two of the three important ways Taylor distinguishes an expressive theory of language differs from a designatory one, each of which has ripe applications to the study of musical expression.

First, in language "things" are formulated; he describes language as the living and constantly fluctuating bridge between implicit and explicit, inarticulate and articulate (1985: 257). We use language to draw boundaries, to erase them, to create new ones, to erase those, *ad infinitum*. This property of infinite flux can be described in a number of different ways, each with a slightly different

emphasis.[17] For example, one can think of meaning as a horizon which is perpetually changing as one walks toward it. What starts out as the horizon of meaning --if it were possible to freeze an initial goal of articulation-- becomes, as it were, foreground, giving way simultaneously to infinitely more horizon which continually appears through the process of articulation. Michael Gardiner describes this mirage-like quality of language as "the false front" of the word, the "direct" meaning which is often thought to be self-evident, but which, as one reflects on and articulates in conversation, sometimes with great struggle, gives way to worlds of meanings behind its "false" front (1992: 88). Or to use a third image, meaning is the background against which we encounter new understandings of the world and of ourselves, but which we are constantly reshaping by our formulations and reformulations --always in language.

As is the nature of an activity, language is fluid, not fixed; liquid, not solid. Taylor would have us think of language as an endless process by which we constitute our meaning-oriented selves throughout our lives. One can never separate the expression from that which is expressed. There is no other way for it to exist except in its expression. Language is ultimately inseparable from our existence as human agents; we depend on it and, in fact, as we use it, we constantly change our world of meanings and with them the language we use to articulate them. This is what subjects do when they speak.

It is important to establish more explicitly before I proceed to Taylor's second point, that this striving toward the articulation of meaning necessarily takes place in a social context. Taylor's second point will make this more clear, but Michael Gardiner, to whom I have already referred, assumes throughout both his analysis and his conclusions that language is social. Gardiner argues

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[17] The seeds of the following discussion were sown by Dr. Leo Mos in his course "Linguistics and the Mind." I'm grateful to him for sharing them.

that there are only two possible choices for language: "Either one must understand language as a series of changeable and adaptable signs invested with living social values, or one must accept that meaning is "essential," implying the hypostatization of discourse into a transcendental structure, having a fixed monologic utterance" (1992:85). Gardiner lauds Bakhtin's sensitivity to the integrity and specificity of each moment of language usage, giving an important place to its impact on and formation by the immediate social context, as well as understanding its connection to wider sociohistorical context. He quotes Bakhtin:

> what matters is ...the actual and always self-interested *use* to which the [direct] meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker, a use determined by the speaker's position (profession, social class, etc.) and by the concrete situation. *Who* speaks and under what conditions he speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning. All direct meanings and direct expressions are false, and this is especially true of emotional meanings and expressions. (1992: 88)

On this basis, Gardiner, with Bakhtin, would argue that because meaning exists only in a mediated form, never in a direct relation to an object, that there can be no transcendental signified, that is, no ultimate meaning which is 'frozen' and unable to be articulated by other utterances. Signification is by nature unstable. Its degree of instability depends on the power relations and ensemble of rules in a given context or cultural situation, such that signification comes to exist (1992: 89). Similarly, that ensemble of rules, in turn, inscribes certain power relations and with them, variously stable practices of signification.

I return now to Taylor's second point, which states that language allows us to put things in public space, in fact, plays an important role in founding that space (1985: 259). The process of articulation is also a process of generating a common vantage point which the parties involved can experience "together."

This takes for granted an important assumption with regard to language and language users, one which theorists such as Michael Gardiner have taken great pains to establish: people live in speech communities. Language does not refer to monologues, but dialogues, or more complex still, polylogues. Gardiner cites Julia Kristeva when exploring this, borrowing her term 'intertextuality' for describing how every utterance "is not a self-contained monad, but is at least partially dependent on a network of other equally unique utterances" (Gardiner 1992: 88). Communities shape and are shaped by linguistic practices, which are integrally connected to our establishing certain kinds of public space, from families to courtrooms to service stations to music departments, music lessons, and music performances.

The public space we create with our articulations is by no means strictly verbal or even strictly vocal. It is easy by our linguistic structures to create an illusion that we exist piecemeal, often seeming to necessitate the separation of our bodies from our minds, being careful to distinguish body language from verbal articulations. It must be emphasized that linguistic practices involve our entire bodies as expressive entities--we are not disembodied vocal apparatuses, any more than we think of ourselves in terms of "a mind" or "a body," certainly not one without the other functionally speaking. Our embodied expressions, linguistic and otherwise, create a public space that would exist differently with a different expressive context and/or action.

Embodied existence, and, as I will explore later in greater detail, embodied linguistic practices, has been the subject of many theoretical discussions, among them Drew Leder's *The Absent Body* (1990). Leder sets forth a framework to integrate embodiment and transcendence, in fact to demonstrate their reciprocity, which involves for him a rethinking of both "body"

and "transcendence." Throughout the book he gives numerous examples of ways one could understand the body itself to be a transcendental entity, not separate from mind or soul or consciousness, but integrally related to such notions in the way it functions, expresses itself, and as he declares, "disappears" in lived contexts.

In Leder's effort to clarify Descartes' claim that "understanding" is the one abstract, imageless type of thought which is completely disembodied, Leder explains how intellectual reason or thought was for Decartes definitive of the immaterial nature of mind, or portion of mind. Here, for the first time and very briefly, Leder brings language into his discussion as the profoundly embodied realization of cognition, the mediated (and only) existence of so-called intellectual thought. Although seeming to concentrate on concepts of language which reflect yet another functional disappearance (or experiential defacement) of the material --the opposite of what I am arguing-- Leder cites the ongoing involvement of the body and of materiality in language, even in language which some would try to argue exists only in the mode of thought, and is not made public by vocal articulation. Not even that, he argues, can be classified as purely intellectual.

> As philosophers, historians, and psychologists have suggested, interior speech is logically and temporally dependent upon speech as employed in the public setting. Thought first arises in a context of material signifiers and social practices. Nor does the interiorization of language free it from its inherence in the physical. (1990: 123)

Leder's book in its entirety challenges the material vs. immaterial duality. He questions the identification of transcendent awareness exclusively with rational thought. I would further question what exactly transcendent awareness would be, resisting the idea that one can ever escape materiality. I would see

the problem not to be materiality per se, but the assumption that the so-called meaning of the material world is transparent. This parallels understandings of language --a material practice-- which not only create it as primarily designatory, but also ascribe to it only fixed, direct, and monologic meaning. Such explanations of language which objectify meaning seem to be indicative of what Michael Gardiner calls "the crux of ideological phenomena in the critical sense" for Bakhtin, and those in his so-called circle. They imply language as social practice, but also specify an intentional use of power to fix meaning in an untouchable position:

> The ruling class strives to lend the ideological sign a supraclass, external character, to extinguish or exhaust the struggle of class relations that occurs within it, to make it the expression of only one, solid and immutable view. ...In the normal conditions of social life the contradiction with which every ideological sign is invested cannot completely unfold because the ideological sign in the the prevalent ruling ideology [...]attempts to arrest, to render immobile the *preceding moment* in the dialectical flow of social coming-to-be, to mark and fix *yesterday's* as *today's* truth. (1992:90-1)

This does raise the question of conflict between on the one hand, an individual's meanings, which are potentially idiosyncratic, and his or her attempts at articulation, which may be equally idiosyncratic, and on the other hand, pedagogical power structures which not only privilege certain articulations, but do not embrace any responsibility for dialogue with the individual about difference or conflict.

Here again, the field of critical pedagogy concerns itself, at least in theory, with the collision of meanings within contexts of unequal power relations, and the return of knowledge-as-power also marks the return of Foucauldian contexts. For example, Kurt Spellmeyer writes:

In the absence--the fortunate absence, I should add--of any power strong

> enough to impose uniformity and make it stick, teachers and students together need to see difference as our great liberator. We need to value more highly than our predecessors did ... not faith in a transcendent or unchanging truth, but a faith in the experience of understanding itself. (Spellmeyer 1993: 24)

This "experience of understanding" of course, must be conceived as ongoing, not as yesterday's truth able to be fixed as today's and tomorrow's reality. Spellmeyer, too, is committed to an understanding of language that is something other than transparent utility but which can "facilitate the repeated occurrence of the experience we call *understanding* , the recognition that follows the discovery of shareable contexts, established undoubtedly through dialogic practice, beyond--or better yet, beneath--our conceptual differences" (1993: 21). In the spirit of the kind of pedagogy I am interested in cultivating, Spellmeyer's *Common Ground* is a celebration of the potential for determining the "common ground" shared between people of unequal power when there is a commitment to meeting honestly on the terrain found between us, as unfamiliar or contested as it may be.

The de-objectification of meaning is crucial to recasting the encounter of the music lesson. If in language it is inadequate to assume meaning to be simply direct designation, existing purely in material or conceptual objects, determinable by a rigorous enough description, then surely in more abstract representation, such as music, such an approach to meaning is even less adequate. I am arguing, on the basis of the above descriptions of the complexity of human agency and the ensuing complexity of linguistic practices in speech communities, that the notion of meaning should reflect the living, changing and self-interested practices of signification typical of human community. If anything, this ought to be more, not less true in the context of a

music lesson.

I believe there are still greater challenges for de-objectifying meaning in the face of written language as it has traditionally functioned in our literate practices of teaching and learning. Music pedagogy is firmly located in these practices. I refer back to Lydia Goehr's understandings of the ways in which the "meaning of a musical work" has been debated and conceived differently throughout history, conceptions exemplifying variously transcendent agendas on one hand, whereby it was freed from words and functional use, and on the other hand, formalist conceptions which argued that musical meaning was related to its internal structural coherence, that it "meant itself." These two basic poles of meaning proved extremely difficult to integrate, only ever "accomplished" in very abstract descriptions such as this one of Friedrich von Schelling's which Goehr cites:

> Music brings before us in rhythm and harmony, the [Platonic] form of the motions of physical bodies. It is ...pure form, liberated from any object or from matter. To this extent, music is the art that is least limited by physical considerations in that it represents *pure* motion, abstracted from any other object and borne on invisible, almost spiritual wings. (1992:156)

For me the most serious omission in such descriptive attempts is any reference to the physical, material bodily presence and activity of the performer. The meaningful expression of musical utterance, the receiving of that expression, and the attempt to verbalize an experience of music causes a crisis of complexity, such that we in music departments tend to take for granted that music is meaningful expression, but do not elaborate it very well, because it seems difficult to talk about what music means without sounding trite, contrived, or in some other way inadequate. The two aspects I highlighted in meaningful speech are no less relevant in the expression of music, namely that it formulates

things between human agents, that is, attempts to express something of our meaning-oriented existence, and in doing so, it creates public space.

It is precisely the intersection of the spoken and the musical, both ways in which human agents articulate meaning, which generates complexity. It is rarely enough for us to hear music; we also seem to need to talk about it, and some of the most intense exchanges in this regard happen in the music lesson. Speech and music undoubtedly share certain qualities, the most obvious being that they are both incarnate activities; both are grounded in embodiment. It is important to recognize that this basic quality has been challenged in the twentieth century with respect to both language and music by the proliferation of machines. Not that they do away with embodiment, but they create the illusion of having done so. A computer can program the form of a conversation to exist, meeting standards of correct syntax and standard format for certain kinds of conversation, but the exchange is not meaningful in the same way as I have been meaning in my discussion of meaning: the computer's programmed responses are not interested or grounded in intentionality; they are purely mechanical.

I think that the recording industry has done a comparable disservice to musical expression. It has given us a whole new experience of music which does not necessitate a living performer, certainly not a "live" performance, nor does it require a formalized "public" listening environment. It has created tools to create illusions of performances which some would call "better" than live: missed notes digitally repaired, memory slips spliced into wholeness, electronically enhanced balance and acoustic quality, overall a purer representation of the "musical work." Embodiment seems to have come under suspicion as issues of efficiency and "perfection" have come to dominate our

evaluations. Even in the arts, it seems we would do away with bodies if we could, so uncomfortable are we in talking about their role and presence (Cusick 1994, Feldman 1995, Cone 1974).

Locating Musical Meaning

What and how music formulates things between people is a paper of its own. I would reiterate Bakhtin's earlier comment that "all direct meanings and direct expressions are false, [and that] *this is especially true of emotional meanings and expressions*" (Gardiner 1992: 88, italics added). I have observed that "emotion" is viewed with suspicion in many academic discussions and is often avoided. I hasten to add that discussions which end up exploring ideas of emotional "content" can easily become rather feeble, amounting to individuals pooling their idiosyncratic cathectics, which may be interesting, but which does not often lead to constructive shared-meaning knowledge, or ultimately shed much light at all on the nature of musical meaning. I would argue, based on my previous description of meaning which does not locate meaning in objects, but in human agents, that the emotional content which we locate in "the music itself" is more accurately located in the people who are approaching the music, and therefore is socially and culturally informed.

Within music departments that I know and know of, there have been long-standing disagreements (unfortunately, usually silent ones) between the various branches of musical knowledge, each vying for the last word or most credible, influential or scientific paradigm to describe the meaning of a piece of music. From my experience and my exposure to the scholarly writing about music, music theorists are usually highest on the totem pole of "authenticity" or "authority" (often their own construction), as far as I can tell because their tools

are most compatible with properly scientific processes of analysis and description, unclouded by so-called emotional bias. The assumption often runs, at least within their own circles, that they are the most intelligent musicians, the brains of the music department. Their traditional job has been to label music structurally, to demonstrate relationships between structures, and if necessary, to create new ones. Prior to university, most students would understand music theorists to be interested in "the music itself" in its written form; critical approaches to the history of music theory are new territory for university music students, territory which seems to pose a threat to the way in which they have been and continue to be taught to study music at an applied level. Next on the totem pole are musicologists, the musical historians and canon-preservers, responsible for writing biographical sketches of the great Composers, ranking their works in terms of greatness and influence, and showing how music develops complexly throughout history. The cultivated tastes of musicologists have presumeably enabled them to distinguish the truly great geniuses from the more common mere imitators of genius. Only recently have music departments investigated the political agendas potentially lurking behind the distinction between works of mediocrity and works of genius.

Somewhere lower on the totem pole are performers, who have a heirarchy of their own based on what instrument they play, how good-looking they are, who they are studying with, etc., but whose greatest complaint against theorists and musicologists is that they never go to concerts and rarely listen to music themselves.[18] Admittedly there are high-profile, successful performers in the world who are musically illiterate--can't read music, couldn't analyze a Bach

[18] One of the music theorists in the music department at the University of Alberta jokingly said to a class (constituted predominantly of performers) that he actually hated music, and half the performers understood him to be serious and added it to their list of grievances about music theorists: "they all hate music."

chorale if their life depended on it, couldn't tell you what year Mozart died--and this is unfortunately interpreted by some rather arrogant performers as being a distinguishing mark of a true genius performer. Thus, they begrudgingly attend their required theory and history classes, and spend every other waking minute practicing, putting as little time and energy into academic music courses as they can get away with. As an insider, I would call this a cultural problem.

However, in my experience performers are the least likely to shy away from a discussion of music that allows the musical expression an emotional dimension. Whole histories of music exist from the perspective of performers, but these histories are rarely the ones studied in a music history class. They are not often written, but when they are verbalized, they are generously strewn with emotionally-charged comments that resemble a religious fervency. For example, Yehudi Menuhin, a famous violin performer, wrote the forward to a book called, notably, *Mozart: Traces of Transcendence*. I quote his concluding comment, which bears a strong resemblance to the benediction a minister would pronounce on his congregation at the end of a religious service: "May the joy, reverence and compassion ever present in Mozart's divine music be reflected in our daily lives, always be so perceived by our hearts, our bodies and our minds, and ever dwell in our spirits": He locates "the joy, reverence and compassion" *in* Mozart's music.

Institutionally speaking, musical knowledges are typically objectified, that is, constructed to locate the meaning of the music within "the music itself." This is why discussions of emotional content often seem so unproductive. We rightly avoid the "how-was-it-for-you?" type questions, but think that we can construct "the music itself" without any vulnerable expressions of our own peculiar personality and associations. Such subjectivity would threaten our credibility;

that kind of vulnerability belongs, if anywhere, in a music appreciation class. It is a mark of amateur music lovers, not something characterizing a discussion involving elite musical experts, at least so we tell our "professional" selves.

This religious-type fervor is not an insignificant part of what is formulated when musicians perform music as well. Deeply spiritual involvement in the music as a performer and as a listener is very much an expected part of the culture of music performance that is taught, and is a part of what we are drawn to in any musical experience. David Gramit comments in his provocative essay "The Roaring Lion: Critical Musicology, the Aesthetic Experience, and the Music Department":

> ...loyalty to the musical experience unites scholar and performer ... [Music] departments, after all, whether founded as training schools for musicians themselves or as ancillary departments to provide members of an elite-in-training the benefits of high culture, have historically cultivated the aesthetic experience by training both performers and audience members, firm in the received and usually unstated faith.
>
> (Gramit 1996: 18-9)

His first assertion I accept provisionally, if by it one is to understand the uniting factor to be that we emphasize the same canon of great musical literature and composers. I have found in my own somewhat idiosyncratic university music education (at least so I have been told), that involvement in recreating, listening to and appreciating the music seems to have become more and more a dividing line between performer and scholar. But I heartily accept his analogy with certain undesireable aspects of religious cultures that, among other things, make generosity and freedom of musical expression very difficult, especially for student performers --impossible for some who attempt it.

The whole question of meaning, I believe, needs to become central to the music lesson: not authentic meaning of "the music itself," but for a start,

meaning in the music lesson. This week-in-week-out encounter between a teacher and a student can sometimes be very rich, allowing a space for both music-making and relationship to mature. But the students I interviewed often approached their lessons with the same dread, severe nervousness, and sense of risk that they feel in a more formal public performance. Students expect a great deal from their music teacher: guidance, technical expertise, and artistic inspiration, but no less kindness, patience, validation, respect, interest in them as individuals. One of their greatest anxieties has to do with what their teacher is expecting from them, and whether or not they will be taken seriously. This is not usually articulated, but assumed to be directly related to how well they play. I have both experienced and observed that the music lesson is a very personal encounter between two people. The only doubt in my mind is whether this is typically understood and explored, or whether it is feared and avoided as much as possible.

It seems that both teacher and student would do well to approach the event with the same caution and respect as an ethnographer approaches a "foreign" culture. The subject being studied is not a musical object from an approved canon. There is no meaning in these objects unless we care about them and are able to make them our own, a part of our broader experience. As demonstrated earlier, the process of learning to care about the details of musical notation and to project that involvement in public realization is consistently linked in the music lesson to the "transcendent" meaning we seem to value so highly in musical experience. The teaching process may be very slow, depending on the readiness of students to embark on such a journey of self-understanding, and depending on the skill, commitment and creativity of the teacher to catalyze the process. As soon as we start caring about the music, it

necessarily gets mixed up with who we are as people --our personalities, the voices and experiences of our background, our preferences, our health and well-being or lack thereof, and many more features of the infinite richness constituting human agents. To deny this complexity and alienate it from our experience as performers--as either music teachers or music students-- is not only to promote an understanding of musical meaning which denies our bodies, but risks making the whole experience unbearably stressful and ultimately unattainable for the majority.

Written Language

> There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of the past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) --they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.
>
> - Bakhtin quoted by Gardiner (1992: 195)

I have divulged my premise that language, including musical language, proceeds from a context of meaningful human agency; and I have sought to clarify a theory of language in which meanings, including musical meanings, are conceived as activities in which we engage, not merely objects which we designate. I am now interested to investigate the ways in which language, necessarily under different conceptions, but particularly written language, has been manipulated historically, particularly in learning environments, to less desireable purposes than the discovery of "common ground" and the infinite

process of understanding.

I turn again to Charles Taylor, this time for a description of how he believes our present twentieth-century fixation with meaning and language evolved. I am particularly interested in the religious roots he draws on, given the religious parallels I see in the culture of high art and music. He starts with "the ancients," whom he describes as taking the human capacity for language for granted, and who emphasized rationality as the more significant trait of human agents (1985: 222). Interestingly enough, Taylor notes that in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was originally written, concepts of "thought" and "speech" (along with a host of other living textual and contextual practices) were expressed by derivatives of the same word -- *logos*. It is as if by connecting the two concepts in language, one could disguise the reciprocal connections between the thought and speech. Furthermore, the possibility for disjunction between the two concepts is also hidden, such that they seemed to take the two concepts' equivalence for granted (which still doesn't explain the Greeks' gravitation toward rationality over language acts). While their understanding of the nature of meaning could be said to point to an expressive theory, it was not meaning as applied to human agency and language. Humans were in this view understated, or even effaced in favor of the creative expression of God in the cosmos, which was "the real thought...quite independent of human expression" (1985: 223).

As I see it, the institutional agendas of the early Christian church begin to emerge in the down-playing of human agency inscribed in the language/rationality question. Creation according to the Christian tradition does not apply only to the "transcendent" cosmos, but also specifically to human beings who are said to have been created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27),

humans being the crowning glory of Creation. Furthermore, to limit the divine *Logos* to "In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1), omitting the parallel "In the beginning was the *Logos* ..." (Gospel of John 1:1) referring to the human embodiment of the divine in the person of Christ, seems a significant omission which favors a view of fixed meaning and consequently the disempowerment of individuals. Besides being a part of--perhaps even the model for-- the long-standing duality which portrays "transcendence" and "embodiment" as incompatible, such an emphasis on rationality/transcendence seems to me an ideological stance which became naturalized as theologically necessary. The question of orthodoxy is politically motivated, stemming from institutional agendas to maintain the power to control the individual by disembodying the *logos* (and the *Logos*). It is another case of products' being institutionally valued more than process. Process in this case I would equate with embodiment, and product with institutional narratives which not only define *logos*, but on the basis of these definitions, prescribe embodied experience according to certain standards, for example "biblical standards of Christian conduct." I believe these interpretational practices are closely related to the way in which written language is portrayed as disembodied, purified from the evils of embodiment and therefore able to be trusted as "absolute."[19]

Turning to the next item in the historical progression to our modern fixation with language and meaning, Taylor suggests that around the time of the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century, language began to be important, but as a systematic way to name and classify the world. The objective classification thoroughly depended on a designatory theory of

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19 I elaborate at length not only because of the religiosity of some musical constructions, but more personally because of the religious voices that figured prominently in my own experience of music lessons, given my thoroughly religious upbringing.

meaning and among other things, separated "subjective thought" from the world of "objective reality" as two distinct and basically unrelated processes (1985: 224). Words became the marshals of ideas, and meaning became limited to effective descriptions of objects, and therefore perfectly transparent. I find it interesting to note with Taylor that "language for the theory of these centuries is an instrument of *control* in the assemblage of ideas which is thought or mental discourse..., an instrument of control in gaining knowledge of the world as objective process" (1985: 226). I suggest there is a political agenda here as well, perhaps at least partially to be understood as a rejection of, or an alternative to the expressive theory of the cosmos in favor of a scientifically "verifiable" theory of the world's existence. Of course, it is not insignificant that the rise of scentific discourse coincides historically with the emergence of mercantile capitalism, again --as observed in both Marxist and Foucauldian theory-- with an emphasis on products and quantitative value judgments. Questions of meaning hence collapse into more "objective" questions.

According to this model of knowledge, one is required to keep saying more and more about less and less, in order to support what Spellmeyer calls "a culture of specialization," which in turn produces more and more about less and less, etc. He quotes Burton Bledstein:

> This segregation did more than organize knowledge in a certain manner...; it produced a different *kind* of knowledge, constructed for the purposes of mastery rather than cooperation--a knowledge made to reflect the image of a world in which human beings mattered only en masse or as abstract types susceptible to manipulation.
> (Spellmeyer 1993: 795)

Spellmeyer goes on to urge academic intellectuals to "give up their long-accustomed and largely self-appointed role as the arbiters of culture, truth, and

taste: either everyone makes knowledge or else no one can, not even specialists" (1993: 801).

However theories of knowledge and knowledge production may differ, no one has ever suggested we do without language altogether; that seems out of the question. Expressive theories of meaning, according to Taylor, became important again in conjunction with the "Romantic" movement (1985: 229), where besides giving expression to thoughts, language was understood as the means to having new thoughts as well as the means to self-realization and -understanding. Language's function within communities of people began to be studied avidly, causing linguistic theory to explode in the early twentieth century, so that our present situation finds linguistic theory practically in every discipline. The representational school is by no means dead, either as a practical way of structuring linguistic theory, or as an implicit grounds for knowledge production. One of the additional (by-)products of a representational model seems to be an indelibly inscribed class system concerning how knowledge is produced and circulated. But there are, it seems, an increasing number of scholars like Spellmeyer who are seeking to reclaim the fluctuating, unstable and reflexive quality of so-called "lived" meaning as the central focus of our language-dependent knowledge production, often involving some radical political activism.

One such example is Michael Bernard-Donals, who writes about the controversial first Rodney King verdict and the media coverage which contributed to it, and more particularly to its aftermath.: "Within a few days of the first violence, the *New York Times* writers had largely framed the discussion of the riots in terms of race (not class) and in terms of presidential politics (not community-level social relations)..." (1994: 66). He analyzes several excerpts

of newpaper articles written at the time, demonstrating how the cause-effect constructions of the events filled a political need, a need to create a material sign of sovereignty, a fixed and authoritative meaning. His point is that the stories that were told in these accounts were very different from the local perspectives of what was going on on the street, which themselves obviously also exhibited partial and differing perspectives. The material realities of the situation were being frozen by another kind of material reality: the material reality of the written word. Bernard-Donals is arguing for redescription and/or reinterpretation as a material practice significant enough to affect or prevent social change.

> We should understand that reinscriptions of the riots in terms of class, of race, of politics and power aren't just 'made-up' ways of seeing the world, but that they in fact have a *physical* aspect to them. 'Redescribing' these aspects isn't simply a matter of recontextualizing the conversation--letting us talk about it in more or less commonsense terms--but in fact is having a physical effect on those doing the talking... (1994: 83)

While this seems a dramatic example, recently there has been interest among music academics in recontextualizing music as social practice, in contrast to the rather fixed "transcendent" meaning in which it has traditionally been located. Formal music education is dependent on texts which exist in written form--musical notation--, implying, of course, its dependence on a sophisticated literacy in performers as well.

The combination of a written code and an institutional structure of knowledge production around that written code has certain pitfalls, as exemplifed by the previous example of religious institutions. These are difficult to avoid and even more difficult to get rid of once they have become normalized. Here I return to Michael Gardiner's discussion of Bakhtin and the ruling class'

use of the linguistic sign to control the material reality of social practice. He classifies the sign, or "the word," into two possible types, depending on how they are used. The first type he calls the "dialogic word" which he describes as manifesting a "'living impulse' toward the object and toward variable contexts, whence it derives its semantic richness, ...natural 'infinitude and bottomlessness'." The second he classifies as the "authoritative word", which is not as welcoming and approachable as the dialogic word. "It assumes that it represents the "last word," one that cannot be responded to, ironized, or challenged" (1992: 91). The Bakhtinian description of the authoritative word perfectly articulates the institutional approaches to "the music" I have observed in the music lesson and in the broader culture of art music.

> This is the word that retards and freezes thought. The word that demands reverent repetition and not further development, corrections and additions. The word removed from dialogue: it can only be cited amid rejoinders; it cannot itself become a rejoinder among equally privileged rejoinders. This word has spread everywhere, limiting, directing and retarding both thought and live experience of life.
>
> (Bakhtin, quoted by Gardiner, 1992: 91-2)

Some prominent feminist writers have argued in a similar vein. Kathleen Jones demonstrates the connection between how authority is viewed in political practice and how it is viewed in the interpretive sense, both as disciplinary devices (Jones 1991: 108). She argues that it seems ineffective to argue and struggle over who is allowed to practice authority without a more fundamental change in what authority should be, such that the issue is not whose voice is heard, whose voice is powerful enough to erect boundaries, whose voice is sovereign to enforce obedience, but rather what kind of relationships are stabilized and supported by authoritative practices (Jones 1991: 109). This has direct bearing on the question of what kind of relationship

music institutions support in the music lesson. Jones insists that our energy would be better spent in displacing sovereignty in authoritative practice (I would hope through dialogic practice), which at one point she distills as "the desire to control difference by representing it as unity" (Jones 1991: 123). I would agree with her prescription that authority needs to become the way in which discussion begins and is enabled, instead of a means of ending discussion and forcing silent obedience. Ultimately, in my view, community proves more valuable than a unity accomplished by domination.

Drew Leder adds a further dimension to the picture in a discussion of how written language has promoted the detachment of body from thought. "[W]hen written down, words and the ideas they express seem to develop a career independent of human bodies. Language, as concretized in the text, leaves behind its voice of origin, is able to live on through the centuries, to be instantiated unchanged in an indefinite number of locales." He cites the arguments of Havelock and Abram that literacy is likely a primary source for the Platonic notion of a realm of unchanging, disembodied ideas. "Correlative to this 'disembodied' object of knowledge, it seems plausible to conjecture a disembodied knower" (1990: 123).

This kind of argument coexists well with Bakhtin's agendas. Gardiner summarizes, "The goal for Bakhtin is to break the stranglehold of the omniscient, authorial viewpoint, to challenge the pretence of any one mode of representation to 'reflect' reality..." (1992: 95). His goal seems to be to preserve every voice, allowing each to be given "the autonomous power to signify." A logical aspiration in this vein is to "'democratize' the process of interpretation", giving each and every reader the opportunity to "reaccentuate or recontextualize the authorial word without fear of retribution or coercion,

whether symbolic or 'real', to encourage the cultivation of 'human discernment, on mature objectivity and the critical faculty'" (1992: 96).

Returning with these thoughts to the music lesson, a radical musical pedagogy would require both an awareness of how the score is wielded and ongoing dialogue with respect to the role which it plays, both in the lesson and in broader musical discourse. I alluded previously in the analysis of the music lesson to the phrase "the music" as it is used in two very different and potentially conflicting ways in the music lesson. On one hand, the score, the written signs that are read and realized, are sometimes referred to as "the music," particularly in the context of the student's playing with or without "the music", i.e. playing while looking at the score, or playing from memory. On the other hand, "the music" is often constructed as that emotionally involved and involving performance of the written that makes an audience forget that there is a "written," so integrated that it seems to be with the performer's interpretation that it transcends both its material existence as the written and the embodied existence of the performer him/herself.

The reader will also recall the teacher's exhortation to the student to abandon the devil's adage "first you learn the notes, then you learn the music." The assumption in this instruction is that in order to perform convincingly and confidently, one must begin with an emotionally involved hearing of the notes, not conceiving that as something to tack onto a more systematic and rigorous learning process. This, it seems to me, is an example of how a radical shift in concept necessitates that one allow the process of learning the notes to happen more slowly and perhaps with more difficulty. Some would insist that it must be this way if one is to escape what one may call "the geewhiz syndrome" of prolific technical tricks, but disinterested artistic involvement. Any commitment to this

process requires not only flexibility and breadth granted to the notion of the "product," but also a recognition by both teachers and students that one necessarily will have less control over outcomes.

The duality between the artistic and the technical is a common linguistic construction in traditional music learning. It seems to correspond to Lydia Goehr's observation of the Romantic separation of Art and Craft in the historical emergence of the work-concept (1992: 152). The performance tradition, and learning situations by which it is formed and informed, aspires to the production of not just distinctive, but definitive renditions of pieces. I believe this can at least partially be attributed to traditional views of "the written" which are rooted in an omniscient authorial viewpoint (á la Bakhtin) which resists interaction. For example, if the student comes to the lesson prepared to play from memory, the student may ask the teacher if s/he wants "the music," i.e. the score. It has become significant to me in my analysis to observe what a teacher chooses in this situation. The choice to follow along in the score seems to focus the ensuing discussion on issues of departure from or conformity to the score. The teacher thus assumes the role of interpretational expert, aligning him/herself with the authorial viewpoint, and making the student's job to conform to and thus attain a knowledge that is fixed, a case in point of Bakhtin's "reverent repetition and not further development." The choice, on the other hand not to look at the score, but instead to study the student as s/he plays, aligns the teacher with a more dialogic viewpoint. The teacher in this case seeks to help the student become aware of him/herself in the learning process, and to establish musical goals that are rooted in a "lived," not a fixed meaning. In such a situation, the teacher will probably exhibit less concern with how "correct" something is. The question will more likely be whether or not the student feels

comfortable playing the music, and if not, why not --rarely a purely "musical" answer. It seems that teachers themselves could contribute to a radical social change in which they do not have the monologic upper hand, simply by learning to be aware of authorial viewpoints and doing their best to avoid them, indeed striving to engage students in dialogue about these issues in their efforts to help students to locate themselves in the history of music-making.

Whether the context is live speech acts or written language, meaning creates texts, and texts in turn create new meanings as new human players become involved in them, themselves recreating new texts, and new meanings, world without end. In the cultural exchange of a music lesson, I can envision such a textual, contextual, and intertextual view of meaning accomplishing some much needed integration between dualities like theory/practice, mind/body, and public/private. But such an integration can only happen with a committed rethinking of what constitutes a music lesson, indeed, what constitutes musical performance. One would begin to ask what kind of an institution it is reasonable to expect the university to be. But if integration does not happen there, where will it happen? One thing seems certain: stated goals of knowledge production must own up to the political goals and practices that inscribe the kind of knowledge that is produced. Such an exercise cannot help but effect dialogic change in the social practices of musical knowledge production.

None can attest to the difficulty of radical social change so well as those who have had to struggle to have a voice in mainstream culture, who for one reason or another are denied the right to signify. Michele Wallace in *Invisibility Blues* quotes at length critical pedagogue, bell hooks, in her analysis of the kinds of speech that characterize black women: from speechlessness, to self-

reflective speech (respected by other black women but dismissed by others), to what she calls "talking back" speech. She continues:

> This third category of speech is the kind that generally gets you in trouble precisely because it problematizes the invariability of classifications of difference. ...Although such self-formulation is not *required* as part of the graduate education we usually receive, the ritual of education inevitably raises the spectre of such a process. The problem then becomes how to pursue a degree as part of a graduate education (in history or literature, philosophy or linguistics) which inevitably denies the significance/presence of the black intellect (female no less!) which the structure of that education denies. (Wallace 1990: 32)

Far be it from me to collapse black women's issues into an ocean of generic difference that continues to deny them a voice. I do not wish to take anything away from what she and others have described as peculiar to black women's struggles to have a voice. I do however, identify with her feeling that the "ritual of education" (and I am thinking especially of music education and its orientation to the "ritual of performance") points toward a process of self-formulation which is then denied by the structures of that education. For example, the intimacy of the music lesson and the dialogic texts potentially created there are ultimately applied to a formalized and critical context of public declamation over which the student has little control, and in which the student is expected to disappear as much as possible into the transcendent or universal sentiment of the musical masterwork s/he is presenting. The experience not only can feel frustrating and futile, but can be debilitating and alienating, as individuals are made to feel they must prove their worthiness according to external, fixed, and at best, remotely attainable standards of knowledge in order to have a voice.

Transcendence

Hovering over the whole discussion is this word transcendence. I conclude this study with a brief exploration of the institutional use of the concept to construct "standards" of knowledge which are fixed and universal. I have referred earlier in the paper to some of the parallels which exist between religious discourse and musical discourse. Both discourses tend to center on a written code, and more importantly, traditionally construct that written code as fixed, unalterable, and absolutely authoritative, survivable at the embodied level only through "reverent repetition," but not available for further development and contextualization. Both religious and musical discourses often evaluate seeker-possessors of knowledge in terms of a performative "standard" of compliance to the written code, or, more significantly to traditional interpretations of the written code, whether or not such a distinction is acknowledged. Both involve a spiritual dimension of participation in the embodied experience of their respective realities, but one which is often separated from one's embodied existence, even as the written is disembodied, existing most purely in a rational state of mind.

Donna Haraway writes convincingly in her essay "Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,"

> Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence, a story that loses track of its mediations just where someone might be held responsible for something, and unlimited instrumental power. We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world, where language and bodies both fall into the bliss of organic symbiosis. We also don't want to theorize the world, much less act within it, in terms of Global Systems, but we do need an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different --and power-differentiated-- communities. *We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that*

have a chance for life. (Haraway: 575, italics added)

She decries the use of what she calls "the god trick," a fixed location in a reified body of any description that boasts an unlimited, untouchable, and transcendent location from which to view the world without being a subject within it. She is calling for significant social change, which, as she describes in the article, can only be brought about by a commitment to becoming responsible for what we learn how to see, responsible enough to locate ourselves in a partial perspective that welcomes other's perspectives and in fact, tries to see from them also.

These are the commitments and perspectives I am suggesting need to become a part of both the music lesson and the broader musical culture of which the music lesson is an extension. "God tricks" typically abound in the music lesson. The most common is the teacher's trick of hiding behind "the composer's intentions" (which, from his/her dead and translated position, become deified.) Lest I am too harsh, I do not think most teachers do this intentionally; no one who cares about teaching would try to erect unattainable standards of excellence and spirituality that are at best ominously unfriendly to mere mortals. But university teachers are not often distinguished by their care about teaching; this is part of the problem. The other main facet of the problem is the tendency to focus in academic music pedagogy on a deeply canonized repertoire of musical masterworks, while ignoring the peculiarity of the human agents actively "meaning" them in specific environments and relationships. Self-awareness is at the heart of the change which needs to occur, such that we construct knowledge in such a way that we are willing to be responsible for our own position in the cultural web, and able to contribute as competent, self-

aware and culturally-aware human agents. I conclude with a quote from Charles Taylor which sums up the nature of the shift that I am suggesting needs to occur in the nature of musical knowledge:

> [T]he successful prosecution of the human sciences requires a high degree of self-knowledge, a freedom from illusion, in the sense of error which is rooted in one's way of life; for our incapacity to understand is rooted in our own self-definitions, hence in what we are.
>
> (quoted by Gardiner 1992: 194)

I understand Taylor's "freedom from illusion" to refer not to an orthodox or official definition in some purely theoretical sense. It seems more consistent with his whole position to understand the antithesis of his "illusion" to refer to an active and constantly changing self-understanding, characterized most significantly by a willingness for honesty and change where one becomes aware this is necessary.

If educational structures in music do not allow for and in fact, seek to nurture, this kind of self-knowledge, then in my opinion, the field of music will become more and more elite. Universities will have less and less breadth of influence on how musical culture is formed, both because musically inclined individuals will find more empowering avenues to cultivate musical interests, and because there will continue to be the often intellectually capable stream of casualties who give up musical endeavors in frustration and defeat because of their experience of music education in the academy.

Appendix A

A particularly dramatic account of power in relation to its pursuit of certain "truths" and the processes it invokes to accomplish these "truths" is recorded by James Clifford in his analysis of ethnographer Marcel Griaule's work and that of the school of ethnography which followed him. While certainly an object of significant negative criticism, Griaule's work is regarded as an important contribution to twentieth-century ethnography by virtue of the completeness and depth of comprehension which he strove after in his investigation of the Dogon people of Western Africa (Stocking 1985: 124). Clifford's analysis seems bent on highlighting the almost exaggerated sense of power which Griaule seemed to be aware that he possessed over his "informants." He made no apology for seeing his activity among them as a performance, as theatrical, and certainly as productive. Griaule seems to position himself in relation to two schools of thought with regard to the nature of fieldwork. On the one hand, he concerns himself with the production of documents via collection, observation, and interrogation; on the other, he seems carefully to regard dialogical processes of education and the elucidation of meanings. Clifford analyzes the two approaches separately.

In his analysis of the first, Clifford demonstrates Griaule's engagement in shockingly violent acts in order to produce the knowledge desired. Even more remarkable is Griaule's apparent awareness of this violence, seemingly with no intention to change (perhaps no understanding of how), and an ill-cultivated sense of regret. Perhaps because of his own flair for the dramatic, Griaule seemed to assume Dogon culture was full of carefully guarded secrets and "most dangerous mysteries" (1985: 139) that could only be revealed/discovered by a kind of violence (1985: 132). Because he believed the least reliable

avenue to these truths was speech (which is itself an interesting assumption), he taught that "the fieldworker had to exploit whatever advantages, whatever sources of power, whatever knowledge not based on interlocution he or she could acquire" (1985: 132). Because of this, he put a great deal of emphasis on aerial visualization and detailed observations from numerous viewpoints, which were then compiled into a master overview (1985: 133). As if this were not violent enough, one of Griaule's favorite metaphors for the process was *juge d'instruction*, taken from French law whereby one first establishes the preliminary facts of a case before a judgment can be rightly leveled. Although the term does not refer to examinations per se, as it was in Foucault's description, it seems likely that Griaule's production of master narratives was motivated by similar disciplinary regimes of power as Foucault's normalizing gaze.

Then there are Griaule's descriptions of the ethnographic process as sheer violence. He writes in exultation upon having dragged some information from unwilling informants, contemplating his own rose-glassed view of his future work:

> We would be able to make asses of the old hesitators, to confound the traitors, abominate the silent. We were going to see mysteries leap like reptiles from the mouths of the neatly caught liars. We would play with the victim; we would rub his nose in his words. We'd make him smile, spit up the truth, and we'd turn out of his pockets the last secret polished by the centuries, a secret to make he who has spoken it blanch with fear. (quoted in 1985: 141)

A more blatant description of the stereotypical raping and pillaging practices of colonial power could hardly be imagined. One has to wonder what all this was worth to Griaule. What kind of knowledge could possibly justify such consciously violent measures required to achieve it? Although ethnographers

have since abandoned many of his practices in favor of more subtle "participant observation" (Spradley 1980), they are no less aware of (although perhaps less nonchalant about) the kind of violence, or at least some sense of transformation, which one's very presence accomplishes in a cultural space, necessarily affecting the nature of the knowledge produced.

The second trend which Clifford demonstrates in Griaule's work is the assumption that "cultural truth" is something to be revealed to the persistent, theatrical, and even violent, but nevertheless specially competent researcher, who somehow --Griaule seems to evade the question of how-- gains special initiatory privileges, and thus becomes an "authority." The most important contribution this special person can make is the generation of original master narratives which in turn form a canon, "a stopping point for the process of cultural representation," on the basis of which "a potentially endless exegetical discourse can be generated" (1985: 149). This necessitates a problematic separation between foundational cultural truths, frozen in a universal (i.e. transcendent) history, and the subsequent development of discourse based on those absolutes, but unable to impact them in any way. Such attitudes and conclusions are consistent with power structures that not only do not have a way to question their own activities, biases and productions, but are not even expected to.

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